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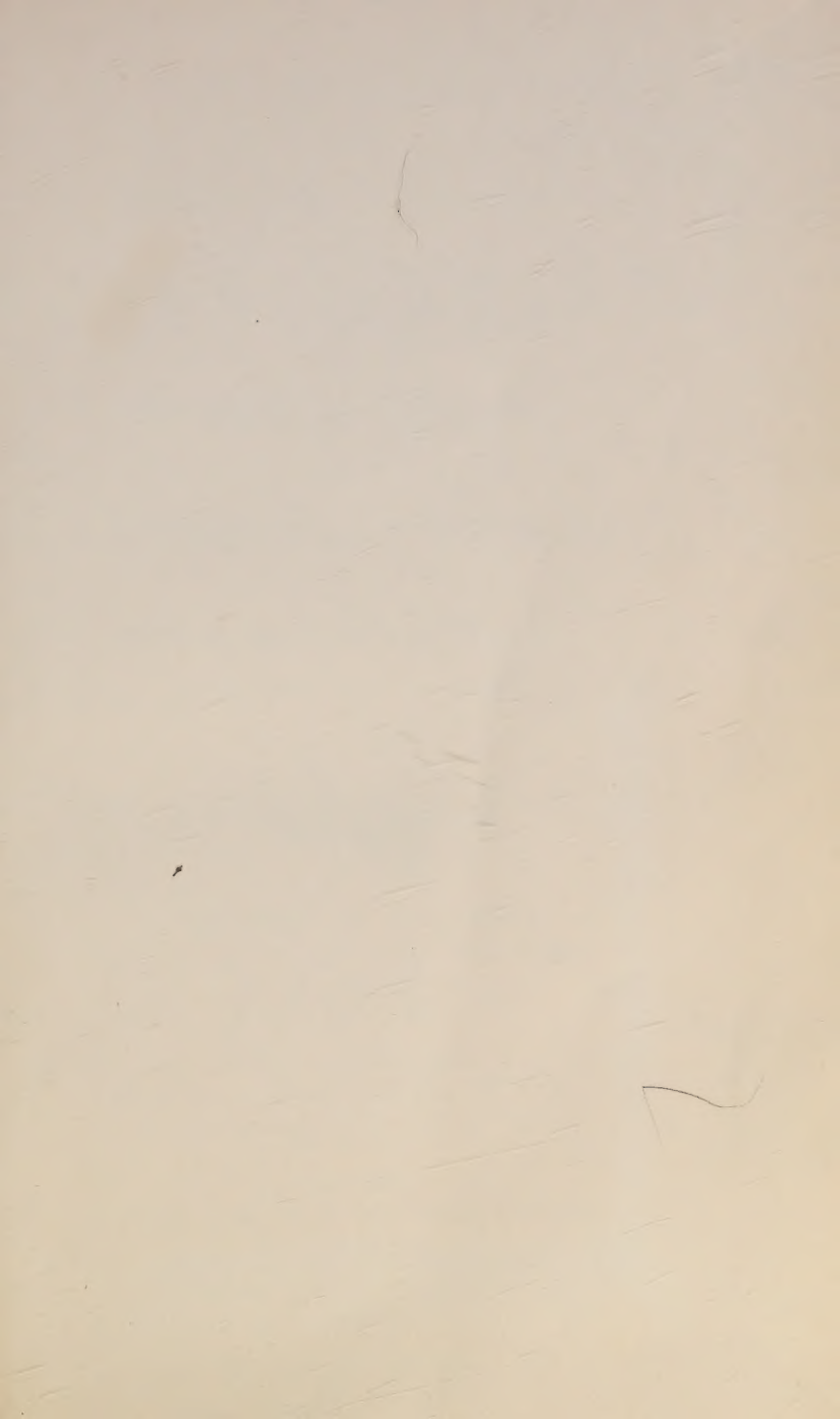
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THE LIFE
OF OUR
BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST:
AND
THE LIVES AND SUFFERINGS
OF HIS
HOLY APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS,
BY
REV. JOHN FLEETWOOD, D.D.
WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE LIVES AND LABORS OF EMINENT CHRISTIANS AND MARTYRS FROM THE
CRUCIFIXION TO THE REFORMATION.
AND

A HISTORY OF THE JEWS,
FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE PRESENT TIME.

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A NEW AND IMPROVED EDITION, WITH NOTES
BY REV. J. NEWTON BROWN, D.D.

EDITOR OF "ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE."

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

IN preparing a new edition of this popular book, it was the desire of the Publishers to make it as perfect as possible for general use. They have spared no pains or expense for this purpose, believing that their efforts will be crowned with public approbation and success. Its typography, engravings, and general appearance, speak for themselves; but the other improvements in this edition may justify a few words of explanation.

The original edition of this work appeared in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1813, more than fifty years ago. Large and expensive as it was, it soon became a favorite with the Christian public, and several abridgments of it for more popular circulation were attempted by different hands, and executed with various measures of success. No one, however, either in England or in this country, it is believed, has done full justice to the Author, or given entire satisfaction to the public, as did, for example, Fawcett's abridgment of Baxter's Saint's Rest. Large omissions, extending in some instances to whole chapters of the original work, have been made in these, destroying the connection and completeness of the narrative; apparently just to save the trouble of a careful condensation which should leave out nothing essential to the perfect Life of Christ.

In this edition, the utmost care has been taken to restore the continuity of the narrative in the Author's own language. His general style is strong and noble, but frequently redun-

dant, and in some parts would bear more retrenchment than has been here attempted. His spirit is candid, reverential and devout, and his doctrine decidedly evangelical.

Some two hundred Notes have been prepared for this edition, chiefly original. Wherever selected, the name of the Author is always given. These Notes, like the work itself, are entirely unsectarian, and designed to throw new light on the times, places, and persons mentioned in the course of the narrative. A few are argumentative, chiefly confirmatory of the positions of the Author, but in some instances, corrective of his text, from the progressive knowledge of the age on the point in hand.

In the Notes, as in the body of the work, the introduction of foreign languages have been avoided, as the appearance of them is apt to prejudice the common reader. But the last and best results of modern criticism have been studiously sought out, and embodied in plain and popular English. It is hoped that the true scholar will find no reason to despise this course, although he should find little that to him is absolutely new. All men have not his helps or his attainments; and thousands will be glad to find in a clear, brief Note, at the foot of the page, information which might, without such assistance, have been longed for and sought in vain.

No notice whatever has been taken in the Notes of the modern theories of Strauss and Renan—self-contradictory theories, tricked up for temporary effect, in the forms of a vain philosophy, and a “science falsely so-called.” They will have their little day, and then pass into contempt and oblivion; but the word of the Lord, the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World, will endure forever.

J. N. B.

INTRODUCTION.

THE life of our Lord and Saviour on earth comprises a series of events the most interesting and important that have ever taken place in the history of the world. They have exerted a more effective influence on the subsequent destinies of mankind than all the events of all precedent history; and they will exert a still stronger influence till time shall be no more. The happiness, both temporal and eternal, of every man living, or that ever will live, is connected with these events, and cannot fail to be varied according to the interest which he takes in them and the degree of influence which he permits them to exert on his own life and conduct.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly possible for us to be too well informed concerning the events in the life of our Saviour. We read them in the Four Gospels from our childhood up, until our familiarity with the language in which they are written often causes us to overlook its sublime and inspired import. An honest and sincere effort to render the life of our Saviour more

clear and intelligible to common readers, by combining in a continuous narrative all its incidents as given in the Four Gospels, should therefore be received with public favor. Such has been pre-eminently the case with Fleetwood's "Life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the Lives and Sufferings of his Holy Apostles and Evangelists." This plain, unadorned narrative, written in that modest and unpretending style which the sacredness of the subject renders so peculiarly appropriate, has been received with a degree of public favor which is almost without a parallel. The "Pilgrim's Progress" itself has been and is scarcely more popular. The public have recognized it as the book that was wanting; and, if we are right in our estimate of its tendency, it must have rendered an incalculable amount of service to the cause of religion.

Real religion must advance in the world precisely in proportion as the true character of our Saviour and the true import of his mission on earth are understood. We should be ever anxious to learn more and more respecting these subjects. We should be ever striving to learn the truth. We should neglect no means of arriving at it. Having read the life of our Saviour by an uninspired writer, we see the events in a new point of view; and we instantly go back with increased interest to the inspired volume to verify by irrefragable

authority every word of what we have just read. This was doubtless the intention of the pious Fleetwood. His purpose was not to make men neglect the Gospels, but to read them more and with greater interest than ever before. If we would know the truth, we should read the Gospels often, with humble prayer for enlightenment, earnest desire for improvement, and sincere efforts at obedience to the words of our Saviour. His own declaration assures us that our knowledge of the truth will be always proportioned to our loving obedience to its dictates. The great use of an uninspired Life of our Saviour is to increase our interest in the subject, and to induce us to study the sacred records more diligently.

The Lives of the Apostles and Evangelists, though far less important than that of the Saviour, are nevertheless full of interest for every serious reader. Their labors, sufferings, and martyrdoms, connected as they are with the first days of gospel enlightenment to a benighted and perishing world, possess a value and an interest by no means to be found in any merely secular history; and their noble example serves to strengthen the impression which we receive from the immaculate and perfect example of Him who spake as never man spake.

The original work of Fleetwood is voluminous and somewhat costly. The present edition is condensed from

it; but it is believed to retain all that is essential to its great purpose of public utility, while it is afforded at a comparatively trifling cost. Such books should be brought within the reach of the humblest inquirer after religious truth. They cannot be too widely diffused.

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A. A. Alley.

THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

PRESAGE OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST—PREDICTION OF THE
BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—SALUTATION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN BY THE ANGEL—VISITATION OF THE
VIRGIN MARY TO ELIZABETH—BIRTH OF THE BAPTIST.

No event that ever did, or perhaps will, happen, can more remarkably display the wisdom and power of the great Jehovah, than the glorious manner in which he brought life and immortality to light, by the gospel of his only Son, manifested in the flesh.

History, as it refers merely to human events, is a pleasing and instructing subject; but that which relates to our immortal interests certainly claims our most serious regard.

If we survey the stupendous works of the creation, we shall find that few arrived at perfection at once. This observation is amply confirmed by the various productions in the natural and changes in the moral world. The Supreme Being, who conducts all his operations according to infinite wisdom, appears to have retained the same maxim in regulating his kindest dispensations to the sons of men. The divine will was not revealed,

at first, in its clearest evidence and fullest splendor. The dawn, in a spiritual as well as in a natural sense, preceded the meridian glory; the former revelation was but a type or earnest of the latter, and, in comparison with it, intricate and mysterious.

The all-gracious God, as it seemed best to his unerring wisdom, was pleased, by degrees, to open and unfold his glorious counsels; and man, by degrees, attained to the knowledge of the great plan of salvation, and the means used by its great Author to promote and establish it.*

Some time before the incarnation of the blessed Jesus, an opinion prevailed among the pious part of the Jews,

* Among these providential means, as Dr. Turnbull has shown in his valuable work, "*Christ in History*," was the choice of a CENTRAL NATION, to receive and lift up the torch of heavenly light amid the surrounding darkness. "As in society at large we find a central power, in religion a central principle, and in philosophy a central idea, it may be presumed that in the succession of human affairs, we shall find among the nations, in a more or less perfect form, a central or a chosen people, whether named church, or theocracy, or kingdom of God. We may expect not only a succession of divine facts, maintaining religion in the world, but a succession of individuals, families, and communities, perhaps some one community differing from all the rest in gifts, attainments, and usages, fitted to retain and transmit to all generations, and finally to the whole world, the principles and hopes of a perfect religion."

Such a people were the ancient Hebrews. Such a land was Judea for fifteen hundred years. What the United States is in the modern world, midway between the two great oceans and continents, was Palestine in the ancient world, at the head of the Mediterranean sea, the very centre of intercourse and influence alike to Asia, Africa, and Europe. Thus its geographical position precisely corresponded with the character and destination of its people, nor could we find any other spot then and thus happily situated for fulfilling the merciful purposes of the Most High. As Moses himself says, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Deut xxii. 8.

that the great Jehovah would condescend to favor them with a clear revelation of his divine will, by the mission of some eminent person, qualified from above to instruct them in the same. This opinion was founded on the predictions of the ancient prophets, who had described, with the utmost beauty and clearness, the person, character, and glory of the Messiah, appointed by God, in his own time, to declare his eternal counsels to mankind.

Relying on the fulfilment of these prophecies, the devout persons among the Jews imagined the time appointed by God was near at hand,* and that the

* Four prophecies in the Old Testament seem to furnish just grounds for such an expectation at that time.

1. The prophecy of Jacob on his death-bed (Gen. xlix. 8-9). SHILOH, in this prediction can mean no other than the Messiah; for our Lord sprang out of Judah, and this was the crowning blessing, the grand distinction of this tribe, whose privileges Jacob is here predicting. Besides, the name here given him, the PEACEMAKER, can fitly apply to no other. And to him alone is to be the gathering of all nations here foretold.

The Messiah being then, beyond doubt, the subject of the prophecy, we need only inquire into the time here set for his manifestation on earth—"before the sceptre shall depart from Judah." The sceptre is the well known sign of royal authority. But Judah did not attain to royal authority till the time of David, and then not simply as a tribe, but as a State or kingdom, embracing within its limits Judah and Benjamin. These it retained after the rupture under Rehoboam, and received from the revolted kingdom of Israel a large accession of loyal priests. The royal authority was rather suspended than destroyed at the captivity, and was revived afterward, first in modified and then in independent form, by the Maccabees (B.C. 163), who, though of the priestly race, belonged to Judah. Now the last of that royal race were the two sons of Herod the Great, by Mariamne, who were put to death in the thirty-first year of his reign: the very year (according to Dr. Jarvis) in which the angel Gabriel was sent to Zacharias in the temple, to announce the birth of John the Baptist, as the harbinger of the Messiah. Archelaus, who succeeded, and for eight years reigned over Judea, was the son of Herod by a Samaritan mother. After his removal, Judea was reduced to a province.

appointed Messiah would shortly make his appearance, and therefore are said to "have waited night and day for the Consolation of Israel." The people, at that time grievously oppressed by the Roman power, and conse-

governed by a Roman procurator. What Jew could fail to see in these events that "the sceptre had departed from Judah," and hence that the predicted time of the Messiah was come?

2. The same conclusion would be reached by a study of the second chapter of Daniel, especially the forty-fourth verse. The kingdom set up on earth by the God of heaven can be no other than the kingdom of the Messiah, and the conquest of the whole world by the iron energy of the Roman arms, would leave no doubt that the time of the Messiah's advent and kingdom drew nigh.

3. The kindred prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (Dan. ix. 24-27) fixed the time still more precisely; and was evidently designed to do so, though many modern interpreters, from various causes, have missed the sense of certain parts, especially of the dates on which the computation of time proceeds. We are sorry to find the late indefatigable Professor Stuart in this category. A Masoretic pointing, manifestly false, plunges him into a perplexity which he is frank enough to confess. But as the Septuagint version, then current in Judea, has no such absurd pointing, we need not hesitate to reject it as an error of the Masorite Jews. Even he, however, admits that the key-verse of the passage (the twenty-fourth) refers to the period and to the purposes of the Messiah's coming, and that the Seventy Weeks are weeks of years, making four hundred and ninety years. He would indeed reckon this designated period from the decree of Cyrus for the return of the Jews (B. C. 536); but even he can find no great event in Jewish history to correspond to this view of the case. Whereas, if we fix the first date from the solemn decree of Artaxerxes and his seven counsellors, in the seventh year of his reign (B. C. 455), its termination, even allowing for slight errors in the chronology of the times, will embrace the very years of our Lord's manifestation, ministry, and death. As the death of Christ, which caused the Jewish "sacrifice and offering to cease," (so far as its value was concerned), by fulfilling the type, was to occur "in the midst of the week," or last seven years of the period, the remaining three years and a half conduct us to the time of the "opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles." Thus every thing becomes clear. And what is to our present purpose, Jesus himself opened his ministry with the decisive words, "The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand

quently anxious of regaining their liberty, as well as of revenging themselves on their tyrannical oppressors, waited the accomplishment of the prophecies with the most solicitous desire. But this opinion of the

Repent ye, and believe the glad tidings." Mark i. 14, 15. A time fulfilled must certainly presuppose a time predicted. And in predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, as the consequence of not knowing "the *time* of his visitation," our Lord refers to this very prophecy, with the admonition, "Let him that *readeth*, understand." Mark xiii. 14.

4. The prophecy of Haggai (ii. 3-9) of still later date, points to the same general conclusion. In it he consoled the aged Jews, who wept at the laying of the foundation of the second temple, by the assurance that "the glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former."

But how could this be? In material richness and splendor it never approached the former, not even when afterward repaired, enlarged, and adorned by Herod the Great. Herod employed ten thousand laborers; Solomon one hundred and eighty-three thousand; and as to expenditure, all Herod's revenues were trifling compared with the wealth lavished on the former house by Solomon, which, at a moderate calculation, would be sufficient to pay the present national debt of the United States and Great Britain combined! Miraculous gifts also glorified the first temple, which were utterly wanting in the second. No fire from heaven, such as kindled the flame on the altar of the first house, descended on the second. No Shechinah dwelt in the Holy of Holies, between the cherubim. Even the ark propitiatory and the cherubim were wanting; the oracle from the mercy seat and Urim and Thummim never gave to it a single ray of their mysterious glory.

In what way, then, could this prophecy of Haggai be fulfilled? Only in the way expressly promised, that "the Desire of all nations, the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel," should come into it, and thus glorify it by his sacred presence and teachings. The words of Malachi, later by a hundred years, thus expound and confirm it: "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come into his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." Mal. iii. 1. Thus the voice of the prophet who closed up the inspired canon of the Old Testament, joined the voices of the former prophets, as if to keep the people who worshipped in that second house, forever on the tiptoe of expectation for the appearance of the Messiah, until his infant form was at length clasped in the arms of the aged Simeon.

approach of a general Deliverer extended much farther than the country of the Jews; for, through their connection with so many countries, their disputes with the learned men among the heathen, and the translation of the Old Testament into a language now almost general, their religion greatly prevailed in the East, and consequently their opinion, that a prince would appear in the kingdom of Judea, who would dispel the mists of ignorance, deliver the Jews from the Roman yoke, and spread his dominion from one end of the world to the other.

While the Eastern world was fraught with these sanguine hopes, the angel Gabriel, who had appeared to Daniel the prophet, with a certain information as to the period of the Messiah's coming,* as well as his transactions in this lower world, was sent to Zacharias, a pious priest, while he was executing his office before God, in the order of his course (which was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord), to foretell that a child would spring from him and his wife Elizabeth, though they were stricken in years, who should be endowed with extraordinary gifts from heaven, and honored with being the forerunner of the Saviour of the world.

Zacharias, when he saw the angel, though he probably knew him to be of heavenly extraction, could not judge the subject of his mission, and therefore discovered a mixture of fear and surprise, but the heavenly ambassador cheered his desponding soul with this kind address: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." That he waited, day and night, for the consolation of Israel, he well knew; which is all we

* See note, page 17.

can understand by his prayer being heard ; for it was unnatural in him to think that he and his wife Elizabeth, who were advanced in years, should have a son ; nay, he intimates his doubts concerning it in these words : “ Whereby shall I know this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” Besides, he was a priest of the course of Abia, whose particular office was to pray on behalf of the people, for public and national blessings ; so that it is very reasonable to think that on all occasions of public worship he prayed most earnestly for the accomplishment of the prophecies relative to the appearance of the long-expected Messiah, who was promised as a general blessing to all the nations of the earth.

That this was the great subject of his prayer appears from the declaration of Gabriel : The prayer thou hast directed with sincerity to an Almighty ear, concerning the coming of the Messiah, “ is heard ; and, behold, thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son,” who shall prepare the way for the mighty Redeemer of Israel. The good old priest was much astonished at the subject of his mission, as he was at the appearance of the messenger ; and esteeming it impossible that his wife, thus advanced in years, should conceive a son, weakly demanded a sign, to confirm his belief in the fulfilment of the promise, though he knew the authority of the angel was derived from the God of truth. But, as it is the lot of humanity to err, Zacharias had, for that time, forgot that nothing was impossible to Omnipotence, as well as that it was not the first time the aged were caused to conceive and bear children, The least reflection would have reminded him that Sarah had conceived and borne Isaac when she was far advanced in years ;

and that Samuel was born of a woman who was reputed, and even called, barren.

His curiosity was, indeed, gratified, but in a manner that carried with it at once a confirmation of the promise, and a punishment of his unbelief. As he had verbally testified his doubt of the fulfilment of the prediction of the angel, he was punished with the loss of his speech, which was to continue to the very day in which the prediction should be accomplished: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Zacharias soon received an awful testimony of the divinity of the mission of Gabriel, who was no sooner departed than he was struck dumb; for when he came to pray in the course of his office during the oblation of his incense, he could not utter a word, and was under a necessity of making signs to the people that an angel had appeared to him in the temple, and that he was deprived of the faculty of speech, as a punishment for his doubting the fulfilment of an event which had been foretold concerning him.

Soon after Zacharias departed to his own house (the days of his ministration being accomplished), his wife Elizabeth, according to the prediction of the angel, conceived, and retired into a private place, where she lived five months in the uninterrupted exercise of piety, devotion, and contemplation on the mysterious providence of the Almighty, and his amazing goodness to the sinful children of men.*

* Nothing could be more important or indicative of the care of divine Providence, than the appointment of a Forerunner to the Messiah, the

When Elizabeth was advanced six months in her pregnancy, the same heavenly ambassador was sent to a poor virgin, called Mary, who lived in obscurity in Nazareth, under the care of Joseph, to whom she was espoused. This man and woman were both lineally descended from the house of David, from whose loins it was foretold the great Messiah should spring.*

This virgin, being ordained by the Most High to be the mother of the great Saviour of the world, was saluted by the angel in the most respectful terms: "Hail, thou that art highly favored; the Lord is with thee: blessed

miraculous circumstances of whose birth were so admirably fitted to shield from suspicion the character of the Virgin Mother of our Lord. Those who lose sight of this connection, dishonor the Scriptures and the wisdom of God in the method of human redemption.

There is a unity in the scheme of Prophecy, as well as in its fulfilment. Three Old Testament prophecies predicted the mission of Christ's forerunner. Isaiah xl. 2-11; Malachi iii. 1; iv. 5, 6. His birth, therefore, was necessary, but the manner of it is a new development of the tender mercy of God; which, the more it is studied, must fill us with increasing delight and adoration.

* "St. Matthew dates the Messianic hope from David and from Abraham, and binds Christianity with the promises of the ancient covenant. St. Luke, on the contrary, places the corresponding descent not before the Birth, but after the Baptism, and represents Christ as the second Adam, the Son of God. In the one case, we see a royal infant born by a legal title to a glorious inheritance (though by his very name, destined to save his people from their sins); and in the other, a ministering Saviour, who bears the natural sum of human sorrow (and gives his life a ransom for many).

"Even in the lines of descent, which extend through the period common to the two genealogies, there is a characteristic difference. St. Matthew follows the course of the royal inheritance of Solomon, whose natural lineage was closed by the childless Jehoiachim; St. Luke traces, through Nathan, the natural parentage of the Son of David. In St. Matthew, the birth of Christ is connected with national glories; in St. Luke, with pious hopes."--*Westcott on the Four Gospels*, 1862.

art thou among women!" Such an address, from so exalted a being, greatly alarmed the meek and humble virgin; to allay whose fear, and encourage whose heart, the angel related, in the most sublime terms, the subject of his embassy, which was to assure her that she was the chosen of God to the greatest honor which could be conferred on a mortal, and which would perpetuate her memory; an honor no less than that of being mother of the promised and long-expected Messiah, who upon earth should be called Jesus, because he shall save the people from their sins, be the restorer of human nature, and the procuring cause of eternal bliss to sinners who had forfeited the favor and incurred the resentment of an offended God: that this divine person was the Son of the Most High God: to whom should be given, by his Almighty Father, a throne in the heavenly kingdom, on which he should gloriously preside, and which, being the whole church of Christ, the house of Jacob, the spiritual Israel, or the kingdom of the Messiah, should continue forever and ever.

The astonished virgin, unmindful that Isaiah had long since prophesied "that a virgin should conceive and bear a son," thought her virginity an insurmountable barrier to the fulfilment of the promise, especially as such an event had never occurred since the creation of the world; and therefore required of the angel an explanation of the manner in which such a circumstance could be effected.

This desire by no means implies her not remembering that with God all things were possible, but only serves to prove the weakness of her apprehensions on the one

hand, or her diffidence and sense of her unworthiness on the other.

The angel, therefore, perceiving the uprightness of her disposition, notwithstanding some little proof of human weakness and shortness of sight, vouchsafed an immediate answer to her inquiry: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;" or, in other words, This miraculous event shall be brought about by the aid of the Holy Spirit and wonderful exertion of the power of the Most High. As thy conception will be effected by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, "therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." To confirm her faith in the glorious message, the heavenly messenger observed to her, that her cousin Elizabeth, notwithstanding her advanced years and reputed barrenness, was about six months pregnant; assigning this incontestable argument for the miraculous incident: "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

This reply not only removed all her doubts and fears but filled her with inexpressible joy, so that she even anticipated the promised felicity; for she, with the rest of the daughters of Jacob, had long indulged a hope of being selected by God to be the honored mother of the Saviour of Israel;* and therefore, on her being assured that such happiness was destined her by the great Disposer of all events, she thus expressed her reliance on the fulfilment of the Divine promise, and perfect acquies-

* This is too strongly expressed. According to the Scriptures, none but the daughters of Judah, in the line of David, could entertain a reasonable expectation of this sort.

cence in the will of the Almighty: "Behold the hand maid of the Lord! be it unto me according to thy word."*

The angel had no sooner departed, than Mary set out for the mountainous country of Judea, though at a very remote distance from Nazareth, in order to rejoice with her cousin Elizabeth in the joyful news she had received from the angel concerning her. The rapture and delight which filled the minds of Mary and Elizabeth, on the occasion of this salutation, can only be conceived from the affecting description recorded by the evangelist Luke, who is peculiar for the beauty of his style and elegance of his expressions.

That evangelist writes, that the salutation of Mary had such an effect upon Elizabeth, that on hearing of the miraculous event that had befallen the virgin, the babe leaped within her, and that she, being inspired with a holy delight on the approaching prospect of the nativity of her Saviour, exclaimed with rapture, "And

* The acquiescence here expressed in the Divine Will, implies a far greater trial and triumph of faith than is generally imagined. This is well set forth by Mr. Ellicott, in his Bampton Lectures on the Life of Christ: "With the rapid foreglance of thought she must have seen in the clouded future, scorn, dereliction, the pointed finger of a mocking and uncharitable world, calumny, shame, death. But what was a world's scorn or a world's persecution to those words of promise? Faith sustains that possible shrinking from more than mortal trial, and turns it into meekness and resignation: 'Behold the hand maid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.'

"From that hour the blessed Virgin seems ever to appear before us in that character, which the notices of the Gospels so consistently demonstrate, meek and pensive, meditative and resigned, blest with joys no tongue can tell, and yet, even in the first hour of her blessedness, beginning to feel one edge of the sword that was to pierce through her loving and submissive heart."

whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke i. 43.) Nor did her ecstasy cease with this token of humility and joy on the important event, in the ardor of which she evinced that prophetic influence, which, while it amazed the blessed virgin, could not fail of establishing her belief in what the angel had foretold; for she repeated the very words expressed by the angel in his salutation of the holy virgin, "Blessed art thou among women;" together with a quotation from the Psalms, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Mary conceived the Seed long promised and earnestly desired; the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, according to the words of the Psalmist: "His name shall continue as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." The happy virgin, catching the holy flame from the aged Elizabeth, broke out into an humble acknowledgment of her unworthiness, and the wonderful grace of the Almighty in appointing her to the exalted honor of bearing the Redeemer of Israel, as expressed in these known words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," etc.

Thus having, by this visit, confirmed herself in the belief of the prediction of the angel Gabriel, when the period of Elizabeth's pregnancy approached, she returned to Nazareth, having resided in Judea about three months.

Soon after the departure of Mary, Elizabeth brought forth a son, the appointed harbinger of the King of Glory; and on the eighth day after his birth, according to the Judaical custom, he was circumcised, and called.

agreeably to the appointment of the angel, John; alluding, in the Hebrew tongue, to the gracious display of the wisdom and goodness of God, who was about to manifest himself to the world by the spreading of the gospel of his Son, of whom this John was the appointed forerunner.

The promise being thus fulfilled, the aged priest was restored to his speech, and immediately broke out into praise and rapture at the marvellous works of God, in strains which astonished all around him.

This surprising event greatly agitated the people of the adjacent country, who were divided in their opinions concerning a child whose birth was attended with so many extraordinary circumstances. Indeed, these incidents were worthy of general admiration; that he who was to be the forerunner of the mighty Saviour of Israel should not make his entrance on life in an obscure and common manner, but with particular tokens of the favor of Heaven, in order to attract the observation of his countrymen, and excite their attention to that ministry which he is called to by the blessed God, even the preparation of the people for the reception of the Messiah, who was shortly to appear in the flesh.

It is observable that the Baptist, from his infancy, displayed great qualities both of mind and body; for such was his strength of constitution, through the blessing of the God of nature, that he lived till near the thirtieth year of his age, when his public ministry began, in the mountainous and desert country of Judea, bereft of almost all the comforts of life. But at length the prophecy of the good old Zacharias, relating to his future elevation, was literally fulfilled: "Thou, O child, shalt

be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace."

As Joseph had betrothed Mary according to the method of the Jewish espousals, before they came to cohabit together as man and wife she was found to be with child; at which he was so much confounded that he resolved to put her away. Yet he purposed doing it privately, probably to prevent that exemplary punishment which the law inflicted on those who had violated the faith of their espousals before the marriage was completed (Deut. xxi. 23, 24), or to avoid the infamy of a public divorce.

While he was ruminating on this interesting event, he was overtaken with a pleasing slumber, and received a communication from above, which fully revealed the cause and manner of Mary's pregnancy, dispelled his doubts, and encouraged him to take home his falsely-suspected spouse: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."*

* Dreams, supernaturally influenced, have ever had a place among the various methods of divine communication. Perhaps it is the most simple method. Thus Pharoah and Abimelech were admonished against taking Sarah: Jacob was cheered on his journey to Padan Aram; Joseph assured of his future greatness; the chief butler and baker apprised of their approaching lot, and Pharoah himself, of the coming years of plenty and famine. Superstition has abused this fact, as it has every other; nevertheless, the fact remains.

The pious Joseph complied with the voice of Heaven most cheerfully; for no sooner did the morning dawn appear, than he rose from his couch, and obeyed the commands of the Most High, by relating to his espoused wife his being assured of her innocence, and immediately restored her to her former favor.

While he related to her the manner of this extraordinary revelation by a messenger from heaven, he discovered in her a remarkable chastity of heart, entirely conformable to so mysterious an operation, and knew her not till she had brought forth the great Redeemer of Israel.

Thus was fulfilled that which was foretold by the prophets, and particularly the prediction of Isaiah, which imported that a Virgin should bring forth a son: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." Isa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 23.

Some supernatural dreams require an interpreter; others, from their peculiar character, interpret themselves, like the dream of Joseph on this occasion. In the former case, they are given in symbols; in the latter the appearance and language are literal and evidently divine.

It is apparent from the evangelical narrative, that as yet Joseph knew nothing of the Angelic Annunciation to Mary. Those who imagine she would immediately communicate it to her espoused husband, are without any authority or good reason for such a supposition. In so singular a case, silence was natural, till God himself should open the way for the communication. The native modesty of her sex, her conscious innocence, her calm confidence in the power and protection of the Almighty, all combined to impose silence. Joseph evidently had no idea of the truth. He was revolving quite different ideas, in the most painful perplexity. Hence, such a dream was not a natural one, but the contrary; and its effect on his mind prepared the way for a full communication of the truth, authenticated as it then was by the birth of John the Baptist.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL DECREE FOR TAXATION PUBLISHED—BIRTH OF CHRIST—DECLARATION OF THE SAME TO SHEPHERDS—CIRCUMCISION AND PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE—THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST WORSHIP THE HOLY CHILD—FLIGHT OF JOSEPH INTO EGYPT—MASSACRE OF INFANTS AT BETHLEHEM—DEATH OF HEROD—RETURN OF JOSEPH OUT OF EGYPT.

AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, the Roman emperor, having at this time issued an edict for a general taxation on all nations, cities, and towns subject to the empire, King Herod, in consequence of that decree, commanded all under his government to muster in the city of his people, or place of his descent, that an estimate might be taken of their persons and effects.* Pursuant to this order,

* Taxing implies a registration of persons and property, an assessment of taxes on this basis, and an enforcement or actual collection of the taxes assessed. Of these elements of a taxing, it appears that only the first was executed at the time of our Lord's birth. For some reason, perhaps the exhaustion of the people, consequent on Herod's enlargement and adorning of the Jewish temple, which occupied the last eight years of his reign, Augustus forebore to complete the taxation of Judea, until about twelve years later, after Archelaus, the son of Herod, was deposed, and the country was reduced to a Roman province dependent on Syria, of which Cyrenius was then President. Even then it gave rise to a rebellion, mentioned by Luke (Acts v. 37), owing to the violent repugnance of the Jews to acknowledge allegiance to a foreign heathen master.

The politico-religious sects of the Herodians and Galileans seem to have taken their origin on that occasion; the former affirming, and the latter denying the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar. These sects

Joseph and Mary, as descendants from the line of David, departed from Nazareth, where they then resided, and came to Bethlehem, a city of Judea, the place of the nativity of David and his ancestors.

The manner and place of our Lord's birth certainly demand our highest admiration and wonder, and are a striking display of wisdom, both in the direction and accomplishment of the will of his heavenly Father. Considered in his divine nature, heaven is the habitation of his throne, and the earth is his footstool; considered in his human nature, he is humble beneath all, being confined within the narrow limits of a manger. Though, as the Son of God, he is the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person, and his throne is forever and ever!—as the Son of man, oh, wondrous condescension! he is wrapped in the meanest swaddling-clothes; and, as man, he takes up his habitation with the beasts of the field! In fine, let us adore his grace and love in veiling those glories for a time which he enjoyed at the right hand of his Father, assuming our nature, and that in its humblest state, in order to raise us to that degree of glory and happiness which, by our apostasy from God, we had justly forfeited; exulting with the prophet, “Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people!”

But the humble manner in which the blessed Jesus made his appearance in the world did not long eclipse the glory of his descent—a heavenly messenger being despatched from above to apprise mankind of their

continued to agitate the country up to the time of its fatal rebellion and overthrow by the Romans under Titus.

Saviour's incarnation. It pleased the Wise Disposer of all things, by his holy angel, first to make known to some honest shepherds, who were watching their flocks by night in the neighboring fields, the birth of the long-promised, long-expected Messiah. The radiance which shone around them terrified the astonished peasants; but to dissipate their fears, and confirm their joys, the divine messenger interposed, and thus addressed them: "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." Luke ii. 10, etc.

The glorious news was no sooner proclaimed than a number of the celestial choir were heard to resound the praises of the Almighty for this transcendent display of his goodness to sinful men: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Transported with the happy tidings of the birth of the Redeemer of Israel, the angel no sooner departed than the shepherds hastened to Bethlehem in quest of the Babe, whom, according to the information of the sacred missionary, they found wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. This event, so exactly conformable to the angel's prediction, equally delighted and amazed them; nor could they conceal the purport of his mission, but published abroad all they had seen and heard.

Having viewed, with praise and wonder, their long-expected Saviour, and offered their grateful praises to

God for the manifestation of his goodness to mankind, they departed with hearts filled with love and gratitude, still glorifying the almighty Parent of universal nature.

After the expiration of eight days from the birth of the holy infant, he was circumcised, according to the Mosaic institution; and thus, by a few drops, gave earnest of the abundance of blood which he was to shed for the purification of mankind. The blessed Redeemer passed through this ceremony, not that he stood in any necessity of conforming to the laws of any kind, being the supreme Lawgiver, with respect to his exalted nature; but, as, considered in his humble state, he was born of a woman, made under the law, and came, according to his own declaration, to fulfil all righteousness, it was requisite he should conform to that custom which characterized the Jewish nation and was one of the principal injunctions of the Mosaic law, under which he was born, in order to fulfil all that is spoken of him in the Scriptures.

Besides, as all the promises made to Abraham were to be fulfilled in the Messiah, it was necessary he should receive the seal of circumcision, in order to prove his descent from the patriarch, concerning whom it was foretold, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." As a further reason for our Lord's compliance with this Jewish institution, we may urge the propriety of his finishing the former dispensation by an exact adherence to its rules, as he was about to establish another and much better.

As the same institution also required that every first-born son, without any regard to circumstances of family, should be presented to the Lord in the temple, by

delivering him into the hands of the priest and paying five shekels, together with an offering which, from the poorer sort, consisted of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons—a ceremony in commemoration of the divine mercy in sparing the first-born of Israel when those of Egypt, both man and beast, were destroyed—so his parents, having tarried at Bethlehem till the days of Mary's purification were accomplished, brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem, and there presented him in the temple to the Lord, in the manner thus described, with the offering allowed to the poorer sort of people; a repeated instance of the exact obedience of the immaculate Jesus to the ceremonial law, as well as of the poverty of his parents, though descended from a royal house.

During the presentation of the holy infant, there entered the temple a pious and venerable old man, named Simeon, who, with all the devout, had “waited day and night for the consolation of Israel,” and to whom it had been revealed by the Spirit of Truth that he should not depart this mortal life till he had seen the Lord of life and salvation.

Accordingly, it was signified to him by the Holy Ghost, at whose instance he came at the precise time into the temple, that the child there presented was the long-expected Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel. In an ecstasy of joy he embraced the heavenly infant in his arms, and exclaimed, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten

the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Luke ii. 29-32.*

A certain good prophetess, called Anna, who had a long time waited for the redemption of Israel, entering the temple at the instant in which Simeon exulted in the birth of the heavenly Infant, and finding that he was the promised Messiah, likewise joined with him in praising God, and went forth and declared the glad tidings of salvation to all the faithful in those parts.

Having, in every respect, complied with the ceremonies and rites contained in the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary, with the child Jesus, "returned to Galilee, to their city Nazareth." They did not, however, long abide there, for having adjusted their affairs, they returned again to Bethlehem, the place of our Lord's nativity.

This step appears to have been pursued in consequence of their opinion that it was necessary, in order to his being acknowledged the Messiah, sent by God, that he should reside some time in the place of his birth. Whatever was their motive for removal, it is evident, from Scripture, that while they were in Beth-

* The songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, as critics have observed are consecutive in subject as they are continuous in time. Where the Virgin ends, Zacharias begins; where Zacharias ends, Simeon begins. The Virgin gives vent to her immediate feelings, and her subject closes with the birth of the Messiah. Zacharias opens a prospective though limited field of vision: he begins with the gracious visitation of Messiah's birth, and ends with the guidance of the Jewish people into the way of peace. But Simeon altogether passes by the first gathering of Jewish converts: he commences with the removing of the vail from the understanding and affections of the Gentiles, and concludes with the final manifestation of the divine glory, when, after the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, "all Israel shall be saved."—*Jebb's Sacred Literature*

lehem, with their Son, certain Eastern philosophers, called Magi, or wise men, on account of the appearance they had seen, went to Jerusalem, and inquired for the King of the Jews, declaring they had seen his star in their own quarter, and were come to pay him the adoration due to his dignity.*

Various conjectures have been formed by the learned concerning this star, which is said to have appeared in the east; some think it was the Spirit of God, others an angel, some a comet, others a luminous appearance, etc. A modern writer thinks it was the glory that surrounded the angels who had appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem on the night of the blessed Lord's nativity.

* The word *Magus* is of Persian origin, and (in the plural) denotes wise men, philosophers, astronomers. They lived in colleges, under a common master, and observed common laws, devoted to the higher branches of study, and masters of all the science of their time. These colleges were found in Persia, Arabia, and Babylon, and it is not quite clear from which of these eastern countries the Wise Men came, who came to inquire after the new-born King of the Jews.

But it is worthy of remembrance here that Daniel, from whom we have the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks of years, was made head of the colleges of the Magi in Babylon, and that those under him could hardly be ignorant of so remarkable a prophecy, or of its proper interpretation in reference to the Messiah, and the time of his coming. A tradition of this, at least, would be likely to descend from age to age, blended very likely with the ancient oracle of Balaam (Numbers xxiv. 17).

I shall see Him, but not now;
I shall behold Him, but not nigh;
There shall come a Star out of Jacob,
And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.

When, further, we remember that these learned heathen connected astrology with their astronomical studies, and so were constantly watching the aspects of the heavens, and seeking to understand their import, we shall not wonder at the conclusion to which they were providentially led on this occasion.

But to leave this subject, as not immediately appertaining to our purpose. The whole city of Jerusalem was aroused at the unexpected appearance of the Eastern Magi; an event which much perplexed the tyrant Herod, whose ambitious mind maintained the utmost aversion to the thought of a rival or competitor, and consequently could not brook a report that favored the news of the birth of the King of the Jews.

Disguising, however, his sentiments, he received the Magi with seeming respect, attended to the design of their errand with affected complacency, and, to gratify their curiosity, summoned a general council, and demanded of them *where Christ should be born*. The council kept him not long in suspense; for, well remembering the prophets had particularly foretold the place of his birth, they replied to the demand of the monarch, "In Bethlehem in Judea;" and, to confirm their answer, cited prophetic authority: "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, art not the least among the princes of Judea; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." (Matt. ii. 6.) The tyrant king, in consequence of the reply from the supreme council of the nation, directed the Magi to Bethlehem, as the place, according to ancient prophecy, designed for the honor of Christ's nativity, earnestly entreating them at the same time, immediately on their finding out the child, to send him word, that he might repair thither and pay his adoration to him also.

But this was mere pretence, and vile hypocrisy; for so far was Herod from entertaining any religious regard for the infant Jesus, that he vowed in his heart to destroy him as soon as he should be found; looking on

him as designed for a temporal prince, who should expel him, or his descendants, from the throne of Judea, instead of a prince whose kingdom was wholly spiritual, and whose throne was not to be established upon earth, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Although we may have many stronger proofs of the divinity of our Saviour's mission than his miraculous preservation from the designs of the ambitious Herod, yet this was very remarkable. The tyrant, in this case, acted with the utmost subtlety; he declined accompanying the wise men in person; nor did he even send attendants with them, who, under the guise of honoring them, might have secretly informed him of the abode of the Messiah. In short, he acted with such apparent indifference as if he had no peculiar reason for despatching them on the occasion.

However, the Magi, having obtained the intelligence they sought in Jerusalem, went forward, under the guidance of the same star that conducted them from their own country. It had left them on their arrival in Judea, which was the cause of their directing their course to the capital, in order to seek that information which, by the desertion of the star, became requisite. Thus it appears the design of the Almighty in directing the Eastern Magi to the capital of Judea was, that the whole nation might be made acquainted with the cause of their journey.

Guided to the feet of their Spiritual King in Bethlehem, the Wise Men worshipped him, and presented their gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, warned of God not to go back to Herod at Jerusalem, they returned to their own land by another way.

It is natural and reasonable to suppose that the end of the divine wisdom, in directing these Magi to the kingdom of Judea to worship the child Jesus, was not merely to gratify the curiosity of the wise men, because the event promoted many other very important designs.

It contributed, moreover, to a valuable purpose, in that the offerings of the wise men procured a subsistence for the holy family in Egypt, whither they had to fly, in order to escape the vengeance of the enraged king. For no sooner had the wise men departed from Bethlehem, than Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger of the barbarous purpose of Herod, and commanded to flee into Egypt with the young child and his mother.

Joseph, in obedience to the Almighty's command, rose that very night and prepared to go into Egypt, "and was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, Out of Egypt have I called my Son."* This prophecy, which is quoted from Hosea, seems originally to refer to the Israelites; though the evangelist's reference will be amply justified by considering that the prophetic language alludes to the subjection of the Israelites to great hardships, and their deliverance from the same by an Almighty hand. Now, as the departure of the holy family into Egypt was in obedience to the divine command, in order to protect the holy Jesus from the incensed Herod, the application of the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," appears very just, as well as elegant.

* "Fulfilled," *i. e.*, accomplished in a higher and more perfect manner.

The King of Judea waited with the most earnest expectation the return of the wise men, anxious to glut his resentment on the innocent Jesus; till, from their long delay, he began to suspect a delusion, and that his designs were frustrated by some extraordinary interposition of Providence.

At length, irritated by disappointment, he resolved to accomplish by cruelty a resolution he could not effect by art, and accordingly issued orders to a large party of soldiers to go throughout Bethlehem and the neighboring villages, and massacre all the children whom they could find therein, from two years old and under, thinking that the infant Jesus, whom as a prince he both envied and dreaded, would fall in the general slaughter.* But the heavenly child was sheltered from above; nor was the relentless king permitted to impede the design of an Almighty Creator. However, the places through which the soldiers carried the destructive sword exhibited such scenes of horror and distress as could not fail to pierce every soul not entirely lost to humanity: no sound was heard but the affecting cries of parents, the groans of expiring babes, and a general imprecation of vengeance on the merciless tyrant. But he did not long survive his cruel decree, being swept from his throne

* Bethlehem was six miles south of Jerusalem. Its population was small; for in reference to this very time, the prophet calls it "little among the thousands of Judah." Hence the number of male infants under two years of age was quite limited, probably not exceeding thirty. Josephus does not mention this massacre among the more atrocious cruelties of Herod, but it is referred to by Macrobius, a heathen writer, as an event which drew forth the severe comments of Augustus Cæsar, especially as the execution of Herod's son, Antipater, occurred about the same time.

by a nauseous disease, to answer for his conduct at the bar of a tremendous Judge.*

The tyrant Herod being cut off from the face of the earth, Joseph was directed by a heavenly messenger to return to the land of Israel. The good old man obeyed the Almighty's command, and appears to have had a great desire of residing in Judea, and very probably in Bethlehem; but hearing that Herod was succeeded in his throne by his son Archelaus,† and fearing that he might

* The death of Herod took place at Jericho, in the month of March, about a year and three months after the birth of Jesus, probably within three months after the massacre of the innocent babes of Bethlehem. So swiftly judgment followed upon that bloody attempt to take the life of the infant Saviour.

† It is one of the marvels of Providence that the removal of Archelaus and the annexation of Judea to Syria as a Roman province, was done by Augustus Cæsar, at the earnest request of the Jewish people themselves. Such were their fears that he would walk in the steps of his father, Herod, that they, under the protection of Varus, President of Syria, presented this request the very year Archelaus came to the government, and ten years before it was granted, Augustus being then unwilling to set aside altogether the will of Herod. But ten years of trial convinced the Emperor of his unfitness for power, and he yielded to the renewed accusations and solicitations of the Jewish people.

Cyrenius (or Quirinus) was then President of Syria, and one of his first acts on the annexation of Judea to his province, was to carry into effect the taxing begun twelve years before, but then suspended. To this the people yielded at first without murmuring; but when Cyrenius returned to Syria, leaving Coponius, a weak man, as governor of Judea under him, a terrible insurrection broke out in Galilee against the tax, which brought great distress upon the country before it was subdued by the Romans. This was the year before Jesus was twelve years of age. Coponius was soon removed, and was succeeded by Marcus, Rufus, Gratus, and Pilate. under the last of whom our Lord was crucified.

Archelaus was condemned at Rome, his property confiscated, and he was banished to Vienne, in Gaul. Thus the great obstacles to our Saviour's attendance at the annual feasts of the Jews at Jerusalem was

pursue the barbarous design of his father, he directed his course another way; and being warned again by a heavenly mission, he retired into Galilee, then under the government of a more mild and benevolent prince, called Antipas, and took up his habitation at Nazareth, where the particular circumstances which attended the birth of the blessed Jesus were not generally known. The evangelist affirms that Joseph, with the infant and his mother, resided in Nazareth, where the holy Jesus spent his youth—"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene," *i. e.*, exposed to every token of contempt and ridicule; of which this appellation at that time was a remarkable instance.

removed, and he henceforth could go up regularly with Joseph and Mary from his twelfth year.

But the voluntary surrender of their liberties to the Romans was a fatal event to the Jews. Odious taxes, arbitrary and rapacious governors, wanton insults to their religion, new political parties and animosities, the rejection of Christ and trust in false Messiahs, led them at last into that rebellion which finally destroyed the nation.

CHAPTER III.

STATE OF OUR LORD'S CHILDHOOD AND PRIVATE LIFE—HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE JEWISH DOCTORS—MISSION, CHARACTER, AND DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTIST—BAPTISM OF CHRIST, AND VISIBLE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THAT SOLEMNITY.

THE precise circumstances of our Lord's childhood and life, previous to his public ministry, cannot be ascertained from the writings of any of the evangelists, which can be relied on as authentic. All we can gather from them is, that the faculties of his mind were enlarged according to the growth of his body, insomuch that he arrived at the very perfection of heavenly wisdom.

As his parents were poor, he had not the advantage of a finished education; and he seems to have received no other instruction than what his parents gave him in conformity to the Jewish law.* But supernatural abilities amply compensated for the deficiency of natural acquirements, and he gave instances in his earliest years of amazing penetration and consummate wisdom.

According to the Mosaic institution, his parents annually went up to Jerusalem, and, when he arrived at the age of twelve years, carried him with them to that city, in order that he might early imbibe the precepts of religion and virtue.† In this place the holy Jesus tarried

* See especially Deut. vi. 4-9.

† Jerusalem is about sixty miles south of Nazareth by the most direct route through Samaria. By the sea-coast, or through Perea on the east

without the knowledge, and consequently the consent, of his parents,* who departed with the rest that were going toward Galilee; and, thinking that he was gone forward with some of their relations or acquaintances, they continued their journey, not doubting but they should overtake him on the road, or meet with him at the place where they had appointed to lodge. But on their arrival, not finding the child in the village, nor among their relations, they returned to Jerusalem, much troubled, and, after a most anxious search of three days, found him in the temple, sitting among the learned doctors, who were amazed at the wisdom of his questions, and the pertinence of his replies; which

of the Jordan (the route preferred by the more bigoted Jews to avoid the Samaritans), the distance was nearly doubled.

With what interest must Jesus at the age of twelve have visited for the first time the Holy City! With what delightful awe must he have entered the temple for worship! With what eager hopes of instruction must he have sat down at the feet of the learned masters of Israel! If he failed to find what he sought, it was not for want of the modesty, docility, and thirst for knowledge so befitting and beautiful in the young, as the sequel of the inspired record shows.

* This does not appear to have been intentional on the part of Jesus. The incident evidently marks his intense absorption in the studies and inquiries connected with the word of God, arising from the impulse of the Holy Spirit. In this divine employment he counted not time. He preferred it above his chief joy. Nor would he willingly leave such a signal opportunity of gaining and imparting the lessons of holy wisdom, until actually sought out and summoned by his parents. So much, indeed, seems evident from his answer to his mother, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house and about His business?" But though he thus asserted the duty of obedience to the impulse of the Holy Spirit over all inferior claims, he did not hesitate to obey them also "in the Lord;" remaining in willing subjection to them "until the time appointed of the Father," which was eighteen years longer. What a lovely and perfect example to the young!

were greatly superior to what they could expect from one of his tender years and mean education.

These doctors, or expounders of the law among the Jews, always taught the people publicly on the three great festivals; and it was on one of these public occasions that the blessed Jesus gave such manifest proofs of his wisdom and penetration as astonished all the beholders, many of whom thought he must be something more than human.

Many people of more speculation than piety may be induced to inquire the cause which prevented the Evangelists giving us an exact detail of the transactions of our blessed Saviour's life, from the twelfth year of his age till the time of his public ministry. To such we answer that the design of the sacred writers being to instruct rather than amuse, they consulted our spiritual interests more than our humor and caprice; and thus, therefore, the wisdom of God, by whose inspiration they wrote, demands our admiration, in that they passed over less important parts of our Saviour's life, which would have swelled their Gospels to an enormous bulk, fit only for the perusal of the studious, and those persons who have much vacant time. Whereas the four Gospels, as they are written, make only a small volume, which is convenient for carriage, for reading, for the memory to retain, as well as adapted by the plainness of its style to the meanest capacities; notwithstanding which they contain all the important transactions of our Saviour's life, such as those which relate to his mediatorial office, and the design of his incarnation, which was to teach us the things which belong to our eternal peace and happiness; to instruct us in his heavenly doctrines

as our prophet; to offer himself a sacrifice upon the cross as our priest, and to burst the chains of death and triumphantly ascend into heaven, as king and head of the church. The omissions, therefore, can be of no real consequence, since “these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.”

During the obscure state of our blessed Redeemer at Nazareth, the emperor Augustus died at Campania, after a long reign of above forty years, to the general regret of the whole Roman empire. He was succeeded by Tiberius, his son, a prince of very different temper of mind from his predecessor. The emperor, in the second year of his reign, recalled Rufus from the government of Judea, and sent Valerius Gracchus (Gratus) to succeed him. After reigning eleven years, Gracchus was recalled, and succeeded by Pontius Pilate, a person resembling in disposition his master Tiberius, who was malicious, cruel, and covetous.

Soon after Pontius Pilate was appointed to the government of Judea, John the Baptist began to open his commission for preparing our Saviour's way before him, according as was appointed, by preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Sacred history has not informed us of the manner in which the Baptist spent the former part of his life; but, according to ancient tradition, Elizabeth, hearing of Herod's barbarous massacre of the infants of Bethlehem, fled into the wilderness to secure the infant John from the relentless cruelty of that inhuman monster, and there nurtured him with all the tenderness of an affectionate mother. John the Baptist was about eighteen months old when

his mother fled with him into the wilderness, within forty days after which she died.

John proved very successful in his ministry, as he enforced the doctrine of repentance because the kingdom of heaven was at hand: persons of all degrees and professions flocked to him, confessed their sins, were baptized in Jordan,* and submitted to whatever the prophet prescribed as necessary to obtain an inheritance in that kingdom the approach of which he came to declare. Among the crowds were many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, some of whom confessed their sins and were likewise baptized in Jordan.†

* Lieutenant Lynch of the United States navy, who, in 1848, explored the river Jordan from its source to its mouth, tells us that though it is but sixty miles in a direct line south from the sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, it is two hundred miles by the winding course of the stream. The width of the river varies, at different points, from seventy-five to two hundred feet, and its depth from three feet to twelve. Its waters are cool and soft. It may be crossed in ordinary seasons at several fords. Judges iii. 28.

† The Pharisees were the *Traditionists*, the Sadducees, the *Rationalists* of the day. The former valued themselves on their orthodoxy, the latter on their liberalism. The Pharisees paid the greatest attention to pious appearance, the Sadducees were satisfied of their superiority to vulgar prejudice. The one boasted of his venerable forms of religion, the other of the reasonableness of his opinions. The Pharisees reproached the Sadducees for heterodoxy, the Sadducees retorted upon them by the charge of bigotry. Both courted power; but the chief object of the Pharisee was the praise of men, while that of the Sadducee was pleasure. The former were superstitious, the latter skeptical. Pride was the ruling sin of the Pharisee, profligacy marked the character of the Sadducee. The Pharisees were covetous, the Sadducees cruel. Under the profession of piety, both were equally remote from the religion of the heart, and opposed alike to the spiritual claims of the Law and the sovereign grace of the Gospel.

The reader, by turning to the twenty-first chapter of this volume, will find full details of their peculiar tenets, as given by Josephus and others.

The conversion of the Pharisees surprised the Baptist, knowing that they maintained a high opinion of their own sanctity, for which reason it was very astonishing that they should express any desire of obtaining a remission of their sins. In short, he was much surprised to find the whole nation so affected by his threatenings, especially as he knew they expected salvation on account of their being of the seed of Abraham—a conceit which they cherished, and which they seem to have derived from a misinterpretation of the following passage: “Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinance of the moon and the stars for a light by night; who divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus saith the Lord: If the heaven above can be measured and the foundation of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done.”

But the Baptist, to curb their arrogance, called them the “offspring of vipers,” instead of the children of

With few exceptions, as appears from the evangelical and civil history of the time, they were, as expounders of the Divine law, “fools and blind,” as professors of religion, “hypocrites,” and as members of society, “a generation of vipers,” equally subtle and venomous. Hence the chief success of John was not among these sects, although they were attracted for a time to his solemn and thrilling ministry. “Many of the children of Israel did he turn to the Lord their God,” but they were of the humbler classes. “And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.” Such is the explicit testimony of our Lord himself. Luke vii. 29, 30.

Abraham. Perhaps the Pharisees and Sadducees applied to John for baptism, thinking by that means to avoid the danger they might incur from being the avowed enemies of the Messiah, whom they expected to come in all the pomp of royalty, and to maintain his superiority by force of arms.

Throughout the whole of the Baptist's ministration, he happily adapted his discourses to the circumstances and capacities of the various people he addressed, and took every pious means to prepare them for the reception of the promised Messiah, who was shortly to appear among them in the glorious character of Saviour and Redeemer of Israel.

Thus, by a life of inflexible virtue, discourses nervous and pathetic, exhortations sincere and fervent, and rebukes honest and courageous, the Baptist became renowned throughout the region of Judea. Such was the admiration of the people at his life and doctrine that, from the vision of his father, Zacharias, in the temple, the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem, and the prophecies of Simeon (circumstances recent in their memories), they began to conjecture that John might be the promised Messiah, and were even ready to pronounce him the Redeemer of Israel; so that, had he aspired to worldly dignity, he might, for a time, have shone in all the grandeur of human pomp, and claimed a regard superior to the sons of men. But, pious in principle and humble in heart, he could not arrogate honors of which he was conscious of his unworthiness; and therefore honestly undeceived his numerous followers by assuring them that, so far from being the glorious Person promised, he was only his forerunner; and that

such was his own inferiority that he was unworthy of doing his most menial offices. "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to loose." Luke iii. 16.

During the time of the Baptist's continuance at Bethabara, the blessed Jesus left his retirement at Nazareth, and previous to his public ministry, repaired to the banks of the river Jordan, where John was executing his commission for him, in order to be thus baptized by him. We cannot impute this conduct of our Lord to any necessity there was of his conforming to the institution of baptism, for purity needs no cleansing: it is therefore evident that his motive was to add a sanction to that ordinance, forever after appointed to be the initiating rite of Christianity, "Go, baptize all nations," etc.

It appears that John immediately, as it were by a prophetic revelation, knew the Saviour of the world; for we find from the evangelist that he acknowledged his superiority, and declined the office: "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?" Our Lord's answer, though short, is very full and expressive: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." As if he had said, Regard not the precedence at this time, but perform thy office; for it is necessary that we should, in the minutest point, conform to the divine will by which this institution is enjoined.

This remonstrance removed the objections of John, and he baptized the immaculate Jesus in the river Jordan in the presence of numerous spectators.

When the ceremony was performed, as he needed

not the instructions usually given on the occasion, he went up straightway out of the water, and, kneeling on the bank of the river, fervently addressed his Almighty Father for an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit, as he was now entering on his public ministry, the prelude of his important mission—the end of which was the salvation of mankind.

His prayer was heard, his request was granted, and an immediate attestation of the divine pleasure given by a visible ray of glory around him, proceeding from the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and an audible voice pronouncing these words, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This voice resembled not any human sound, but was loud and awful, like the thunder of heaven, in order to strike with reverence the surrounding multitude, and publicly declare the holy mission of the promised Messiah.

The blessed Jesus was declared in the Old Testament to be the Son of God, but was on this occasion declared by the Almighty himself to be the long expected deliverer of Israel. Thus all who were present at this marvellous descent of the Holy Spirit were amply convinced of the divine mission of our blessed Lord by an infallible testimony from above. This remarkable event tended much more to the glory of the Messiah than all the prophecies, as it was in some measure a real display of what they could only picture in the dark



CHAPTER IV.

COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SAVIOUR'S MINISTRY—HIS TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS—DEPUTATION OF THE SANHEDRIM TO JOHN THE BAPTIST—FIRST MIRACLE WROUGHT BY THE BLESSED JESUS.

THE great Redeemer, having thus complied with the institution of baptism, and received a most convincing testimony of his heavenly Father's approbation, by the miraculous descent and effusion of the Holy Ghost upon him while praying on the banks of the Jordan in the presence of a multitude of spectators, entered on his public ministry at the age of thirty years, according to the custom of the priests among the Jews.

It was apprehended by the people that, as he had just begun his public office, he would repair to Jerusalem, the seat of power and grandeur, in order to display to the mighty and the learned his miraculous abilities and effulgent glories.)

But, averse to human praise, the heavenly-minded Jesus preferred solitude to the noise and hurry of mortal life: he therefore retired into the wilderness in order to prepare himself, by fasting, meditation, prayer, and sustaining temptation, for the important work on which he was entering—the salvation of mankind.

To promote this grand design, the evangelists write that this retirement into the wilderness was in consequence of the immediate direction of the Divine Spirit. Though solitude itself is melancholy, the blessed Jesus added to the dismal scene by retiring on a barren spot

surrounded by high and craggy mountains and forming a dark and gloomy chaos.

The Saviour of the world has not only been exposed to poverty and ridicule, but also to the most trying temptation of Satan; that, as the Captain of our salvation has undergone the same, we ought not to faint when we are tempted, but, like him, be able to withstand the fiery darts of the devil.

It doubtless appears highly proper, in order that our blessed Lord and Master might both enter upon and prosecute his ministry with more glory to himself and advantage to mankind, that he should previously overcome the most subtle arts of that deceiver who, under the mask of a serpent, seduced our first parents and involved them and their posterity in one common ruin.*

The peculiar devices of the old serpent to tempt the Son of God during the time of his fasting are not recorded in Holy Writ, and consequently they cannot be ascertained.

But, at the expiration of the forty days, when the blessed Jesus had endured the keenest hunger, the tempter, to make proof of the divinity of his mission, insolently demanded why he bore the sensations of hunger, since, if he was the Son of God, he must have

* How just and forcible are the remarks of Mr. Robertson: "You must remember his soul was preparing for his work; he was forecasting the trials of his life; his spirit was silently acquiescing in and recognizing his destiny; and one by one dismissing the alternatives which suggested themselves—a life of ease instead of hardness: rashness and distrustful impetuosity instead of the slow, patient toil of years, and after that of centuries; homage to 'the splendid majesty of wrong'—expediency in some form or other to make the kingdoms of the world his own—instead of uncompromising worship of the good."

power to change the stones of that dreary wilderness into bread; and, by so marvellous a transmutation, he might have the satisfaction of knowing the truth of what was said concerning him at his baptism.*

But our blessed Saviour repelled his device by citing the words of Moses, which implied that God, whenever it seemed good in his sight, could, by extraordinary means, provide for the support of the human race. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke iv. 4.

Satan, being defeated in his effort, took him to the top of a very high mountain,† and, thinking to work on him by another artifice, showed him a bright view of all the kingdoms of the world, with all their alluring glories, promising him universal empire over the whole if he would bow down and yield him the honor of the benefaction.

But observe his accursed pride and arrogance in promising that which is the gift of God alone—universal empire over the earth; and requiring what was due to none but the Supreme—religious homage.‡ This blas-

* "What was the temptation? To use Divine power to procure comfort; to choose abundance instead of stones; a life of ease instead of the hard rock on which the highest must repose in this world"—*Robertson*.

† Our author here follows the order of St. Luke in preference to that of Matthew and Mark. We cannot but think the latter order of the temptations the most natural, especially as it then closes with the stern rebuke of our Lord, which drives the Tempter from his presence.

‡ No one has pointed out the force of this temptation so clearly as Neander in his *Life of Christ*: "Herein was the temptation that the Messiah should not develop his kingdom gradually and in its pure spirituality from within, but establish it at once as an outward dominion; and that although this could not be accomplished without the use of an evil agency, the end would justify the means. We find here the principle

phemy, as well as insolence, incited the blessed Jesus to exert his divine authority and command him, in a peremptory manner, to desist; citing this special injunction from sacred writ, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Thus repelled, he repeated the attempt, and, having taken our Lord to Jerusalem, placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, and, by a taunt of insolence, urged him to prove the truth of his mission by casting himself down from thence; citing, as an encouragement for him to comply with his desire, a text from the Psalms: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Matt. iv. 6. But our Saviour soon baffled this attempt by another apt quotation from Scripture: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Matt. iv. 7. Thou shalt not provoke the Lord, either by disobeying his command or by an impertinent curiosity to know more concerning his mind and will than he is pleased to reveal.*

that to try to establish Messiah's kingdom as an outward, worldly dominion, *is to wish to turn the kingdom of God into the kingdom of the devil*, and to employ that fallen intelligence which pervades all human sovereignties, only in a different form, to found the kingdom of Christ."

* The scene of this temptation, the pinnacle, or rather battlement of the temple, deserves consideration. By the Jewish law, the roof of every private dwelling, for the safety of the inmates, was to be surrounded by a wall or parapet; and, according to Josephus, this was the case with the temple. On the east side, where the descent was perpendicular into the deep valley of the Kedron, the top of this parapet was not far from six hundred feet, and one standing there could scarcely see the objects below from the dizzy height. What a spot was this for the purpose of the Tempter! And observe, he urges the Son of God to this act of arro-

Thus baffled in all his arts and devices by the wisdom and power of the Son of God, he departed from him, and a host of celestial spirits, despatched from the regions of bliss, came and ministered refreshment to our Saviour after his victory over the great enemy of his Father and of mankind.

Hence, notwithstanding the ridicule of the infidel, Christians may derive great encouragement to fight manfully against the flesh, the world, and the devil, under the banner of the great Captain of their salvation, who is ever ready to supply them with spiritual armor to sustain the combat with that inveterate and subtle foe whose devices he has experienced—being in every respect tempted like them.*

giant presumption by a quotation from the Scripture, so artfully cited and mutilated as to make it seem a promise of Divine support in the most unwarrantable undertaking. The words "*in all thy ways*," which are evidently intended to restrict the promise to the course of duty, wisdom, and prudence, are dropped in the quotation of the passage by the devil, who here shows himself an expert in "wresting the Scriptures." Let us so study the Scriptures, that we may be able, like our Lord, to detect the artifices of the Tempter, when he comes to us in the form of an angel of light.

To act without a Divine warrant in the word of God, or without prayer for Divine direction in our daily affairs; to borrow from former self-denial a plea for present indulgence, or a proud presumption of the Divine favor in all our projects, right or wrong, wise or unwise, is to fall into the snare of the devil. When we see "the sons of God" marry merely for beauty; Noah overcome by excess; Lot dwelling in Sodom for gain; Uzzah touching the ark of the covenant; David gazing from the roof of his palace into the bath of his neighbor, well may we continually pray, "*Lead us not into temptation.*"

* Temptation varies its form with age, sex, talents, temperament, condition, and social relations; and we may sometimes regard our own temptation as quite peculiar, and without any precedent in the experience of Christ. But in this thought we forget his perfect humanity, his representative character, and exquisite sensibility and sympathy. When

During the time of our Saviour's retirement in the wilderness, his faithful harbinger, the Baptist, being assured, from the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit and other concurring testimonies, that Jesus was the promised and long-expected Messiah, continued publishing his mission to the multitude; so that the rulers in Jerusalem received information of the surprising events that had happened in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, before they saw the blessed Jesus, in confirmation of whose mission and doctrine they were effected. Prompted by curiosity, they despatched a deputation of priests and Levites to the Baptist, to demand of him who he was; whether he was the Messiah or Elias, or a prophet risen from the dead to precede the Messiah, the powerful Prince so earnestly expected by the whole nation of Israel.

The Baptist frankly replied that he was not the Messiah whom they expected, nor Elias, who, as they had vainly thought, would personally appear among them, nor any other prophet risen from the dead; but, at the same time, hinted to them that, though he was not Elias himself, yet he was that person spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, and him of whom he thus prophesied: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isa. xl. 3.

The priests and Levites, not sufficiently gratified with this reply of the Baptist, demanded of him why he assumed the power of baptizing the people if he was neither the Messiah, nor Elias, nor any of the ancient

tempted to any sins of the flesh, we must think of his hunger; to any sins of the spirit, of his position on the temple; to any sins of society, of his undazzled survey of all the glories of the world.

prophets risen from the dead.* To this demand, John answered, I indeed baptize to show the necessity of repentance: but my baptism is only that of water, and wholly ineffectual of itself to the remission of sins; but that washing foretold by Zechariah is of sovereign effect:† it is not my province, but solely that of the Messiah, who is actually upon earth and among you, though ye know him not, because he hath not yet manifested himself to the world. The Messiah is so far exalted beyond me in power and dignity that I am not worthy to do him the meanest offices.

The day after the departure of the priests and Levites from Bethabara, our blessed Lord left the wilderness and repaired thither himself, while John was yet baptizing and preaching the doctrine of repentance.

The Baptist, as his grand business was to direct all persons to the Messiah for life and salvation in and through him, embraced this seasonable opportunity of pointing him out to the multitude: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!" Lest the attending crowd should surmise that it had been previously concerted between Jesus and John, that the former should assume, and the latter give him, the appellation of Messiah, he publicly and solemnly declared that he was, equally with them, ignorant of the preten-

* This seems to settle the question, often discussed on other grounds, whether the baptism of John belonged to the Levitical dispensation, and was administered by John as a priest. The very inquiry here proposed by the delegation from Jerusalem, shows that they did not at all regard it in that light, but rather as a new institute which could be administered rightfully only by a new Divine commission. Such a commission John expressly claimed.

† See Zech. xiii. 1.

sions of Jesus to that high character* till he saw the descent of the Holy Ghost, and heard him pronounced, in the most awful manner, the Son of God : “And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” John i. 32–34.

The Baptist having made this declaration, the Messiah left Bethabara, but returned the day following; and John, happening to stand with two of his followers on the bank of the river Jordan, pointed to him as he passed, and, in a pious rapture, repeated what he had addressed to the multitude the preceding day: “Behold the Lamb of God!” It is hence imagined that these two disciples or followers of the Baptist were absent at the time of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and for that reason this method was taken of pointing out to them the venerable person of the Redeemer of the world.

Animated with an ardent desire of hearing, as well as seeing, this extraordinary person, they left John and followed Jesus, who, conscious of their design, turned about, and, with the utmost affability, gave them an

* This is by no means inconsistent with the language of John to Jesus before the baptism. He might have heard enough of the character of Jesus from others, to feel his own inferiority; or the prophetic impulse might have suddenly anticipated the evidence which was afterward given by the appointed sign. He, therefore, spoke then as he *felt*, without the certainty of *knowledge* which was necessary to assure both himself and others of the Messiahship of Jesus. Not till the Spirit descended visibly upon Jesus, did John *know* him, beyond a doubt, as the Son of God.

invitation to the place of his residence. The evangelist John informs us that one of these disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter; and it is conjectured from his silence that himself was the other; for it is remarkable that, in his writings, he has studiously concealed his own name. Be that as it may, it is abundantly evident that the testimony of the Baptist, added to the tokens he had from the blessed Jesus in the course of his converse with him, amply satisfied Andrew that he was indeed the promised Messiah, the Saviour and Redeemer of a lost and perishing world.

Andrew soon after found his brother Peter and brought him to our blessed Lord, who immediately called him by his name, telling him that he should afterward be called Cephas (which signifies a rock), from his firm resolution of mind, and also because he should contribute toward the foundation of the Christian church.

Some time after, Jesus met with Philip, an inhabitant of the town of Bethsaida, and said unto him, "Follow me." Philip immediately obeyed the divine command, having heard of the character and mission of our blessed Saviour. It is supposed that this disciple was present at the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit on our Lord at his baptism, which being admitted, his compliance with his call is no matter of admiration.

Philip, meeting with Nathanael, an inhabitant of Cana, a town in Galilee, informed him of the actual coming of the long-expected Messiah, that great Deliverer of Israel spoken of by Moses and the ancient prophets, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael was assured, from the predictions concerning the Messiah, that he was to be descended from the line of David

and born in the city of Bethleñem, and therefore discovered an amazement at his being called Jesus of Nazareth: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"* Can that most contemptible of places, Nazareth, be supposed to have given birth to the mighty Saviour, the Prince of Peace, especially as it was expressly foretold by the prophet that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David?

Notwithstanding the improbability of such an event, Nathanael listened to Philip, and determined on an examination of the person whom he said was the promised Messiah. Accordingly, under his direction, he repaired to the blessed Jesus, who, knowing his character, saluted him on his approach with this honorable appellation: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

Nathanael, amazed at our Lord's pertinent address, as he had never before seen him, asked by what means he obtained such precise knowledge of him. Our Lord replied, he had seen him under the fig-tree. Probably Nathanael had been praying under the fig-tree, and been overheard by our Lord, who, from the substance of his prayer, thus concluded his character; for when the blessed Jesus informed him that he gave him that character on account of what had passed under the fig-tree, Nathanael perceived that he knew not only what had passed at a distance, but had access to the inmost thoughts of the heart, a property not allotted to mortals, and therefore exclaimed, with rapture, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."

* Nothing could more mark the meanness and general bad reputation of Nazareth than this language of Nathanael, who lived within a few miles of the place.

Our Saviour then told him he should hereafter have much stronger testimonials of the divinity of his mission, when he should be eye-witness to what the old patriarch Jacob had before seen in a vision—the angels of heaven descending and ascending, to attend the person and execute the commands of the Son of Man: an appellation our blessed Lord assumed, not only as considering his humanity, but in order to fulfil most peremptorily that remarkable prediction of the prophet Daniel concerning him: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Dan. vii. 13, 14.

The great Redeemer, having attested the divinity of his mission by many incontestable evidences, and made five disciples, departed for Galilee, where, soon after his arrival, he was invited, with his mother and disciples, to a marriage-feast at Cana, a place near Nazareth. At these nuptials there happened to be a scarcity of wine, and his mother, who interested herself in the conduct of the feast, and was therefore desirous that every thing should be done with decorum, applied to her Son, hoping he would be able to remedy the defect. She had doubtless conceived he had the power of working miracles, and was therefore desirous that he would give proof of his ability in the presence of her friends, who were assembled at the marriage.

Addressing herself, therefore, to her Son, she told him "They have no wine." Our Lord gently reproved her, in these words: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?* mine hour is not yet come:" that is, The time or period of my public ministry is not yet arrived; nor is it time for me to display my supernatural powers.

Notwithstanding this mild reproof, his mother still entertained an opinion that he would interest himself in behalf of her and the company, and therefore ordered the servants punctually to obey his commands.

Our blessed Lord, being assured that working a miracle would greatly tend to confirm the faith of his young disciples, exerted his divine power, by ordering the servants to fill six water-pots, containing each about twenty gallons, with water; which was no sooner done than the whole was converted into excellent wine.†

He then ordered them to draw, and bear to the

* There is nothing necessarily harsh in the word "woman," as here used by our Lord. Even on the cross, when most tenderly committing his mother to the care of his beloved disciple, he used the same word in his address to her. Yet here, in connection with the words which follow, it takes a tone of solemn majesty; as if he had said, "Remember, my mother, what you are, and that in the higher relation I sustain to my heavenly Father, I must act, not under your dictation, but solely in obedience to his commission." What a protest was this against that false confidence, amounting to actual idolatry, which has since been taught in the intercession of Mary!

† It was an ancient tradition, that this marriage took place at the house of Cleophas, or Alpheus, the brother-in-law of the Virgin, or at least her near relation, and that the bridegroom was his son, "Simon, the Cananite," afterward one of our Lord's apostles. If so, then it naturally accounts for the presence of Jesus, and for the interest expressed by Mary in the want of wine sufficient for the feast, which, as usual, was of a week's duration. But it will not account for our Lord's consent to put forth his miraculous power for the relief of their poverty, nor for the

governor of the feast; who, being ignorant of the miracle that had been wrought, and astonished at the preference of this wine to that which had been served up at the beginning of the feast, addressed himself to the bridegroom, in the hearing of the whole company, telling him that, contrary to the usual custom, he had reserved the best wine to the last; at the same time commending so judicious a practice, as a plain proof of his approbation of his friends present at the entertainment. The bridegroom was equally surprised at the address of the governor of the feast, and the occasion of it, which was effected by the supernatural power of our blessed Lord.

This miracle, which was the first wrought by Jesus, confirmed the faith of his followers, and spread his renown through the adjacent country. On leaving Cana he departed toward Jerusalem, to attend the approaching Passover.

great quantity furnished, which far exceeded the demand for the occasion, and must have been an ample supply for domestic use for a long time to come. Higher motives governed his action in this case.

The true design of the miracle was threefold: 1. To give a new sanction to Marriage under the Christian dispensation; 2. To manifest the Saviour's glory as the sovereign Lord of nature; and 3. To confirm the faith of his disciples in his divine mission, and his power to help in every time of need.

This miracle shows that the use of wine, under some circumstances, and in some degree, is lawful. But it does not prove its habitual use as a beverage obligatory, or even expedient, where it is likely to become a snare to ourselves or a stumbling-block to others. So the question of Temperance is finally decided by Christian love, in *Romans* xiv. 21.

CHAPTER V.

EXPULSION OF THE PROFANERS OF THE TEMPLE—JESUS CONVERSES WITH NICODEMUS—BAPTIZES IN JUDEA—INSTRUCTS A POOR SAMARITAN—HEALS A SICK PERSON AT CAPERNAUM—RETIRES AGAIN TO NAZARETH, AND IS EXPELLED THENCE BY HIS IMPIOUS COUNTRYMEN.

OUR blessed Lord, immediately on his arrival at Jerusalem, repaired to the temple, where he was shocked at beholding a place dedicated to the solemn service of Almighty God so prostituted to purposes of fraud and avarice, and become the resort of traders of every kind. It is evident there must have been a grand market for oxen, sheep, and doves at such times, for Josephus tells us that no less than two hundred and fifty-six thousand victims were offered at one passover.*

Such abuse could not long escape his notice or correction, having an absolute right to chastise so flagrant a perversion of a place that, strictly speaking, was his own. “The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come

* The Passover was the chief annual festival of the Jewish nation. It was appointed and kept on the very night they left Egypt, to commemorate the wonderful deliverance they experienced, when the Angel of the Lord passed through the land, and slew all the first-born of the Egyptians. Every Hebrew house was passed over unharmed, because, by divine appointment, it was sprinkled with the blood of a lamb. The festival fell on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, which corresponds to parts of March and April, according to the day of the full of the moon. It was attended by the people from all quarters with great zeal, and was continued for eight days, including two Sabbaths. Jerusalem was densely crowded on these occasions.

to HIS temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Accordingly, the blessed Jesus, whose pious soul was vexed at their profanation of the sacred place, drove out the traders, and upset the tables of the money-changers, saying unto them that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not my father's house a house of merchandise."

These mercenary wretches appear to have been struck at once with a consciousness of their guilt and the severity of our Lord's reproof, so they immediately departed without making the least resistance. But, our Lord's conduct in this affair carrying with it every token of zeal, for which the ancient prophets were so remarkable, the Jewish Council assembled, and determined to inquire by what authority he attempted such a reformation, requiring at the same time a demonstrative proof of the divinity of his commission.

To gratify their curiosity,* our Lord referred them only to the miracle of his own resurrection: "Destroy," said he, probably laying his hand on his breast, "this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." The rulers, mistaking his meaning, imagined that he referred to the superb and lofty temple finished by Herod, and

* It strikes us that this answer of Jesus was designed not to gratify curiosity at all, but rather to intimate his prophetic knowledge of the malice and murder already hidden in their guilty hearts, and which time so fully developed when they put him to death. The original word here used by Christ, denotes the inner sanctuary—the immediate dwelling-place of Deity—and is, hence, peculiarly appropriate to his body as the shrine of the Invisible God. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. ii. 9.

therefore told him such a destruction was highly improbable, nor had they the least reason to think he could possibly rebuild in three days that magnificent structure, which had been finished at immense expense and was the labor of so many years.*

Though the blessed Jesus declined compliance with the request of the mighty and noble among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he wrought several miracles in the presence of the whole people, in order to confirm the doctrines he delivered and prove the divinity of his mission.

As there had not been any miracles wrought amongst them for a considerable time,† though many were recorded in their sacred books, they beheld our blessed Lord with amazement and veneration; and numbers were satisfied that he was the long-promised Messiah, “the desire of all nations,” so often foretold by the ancient prophets. For wise reasons, however, he did not publicly declare that he was the Great Prophet, as he knew

* The temple had been repaired and adorned but a short time before by Herod, at great expense, to conciliate the Jews, as well as to gratify his own vanity. He little thought he was thus fitting it up for the more worthy reception of the Messiah. The work was begun in the twenty-first year of his reign, and in eight years the body of the house was finished; but all the outworks, including some new foundations, with the courts, corridors, and chambers, were not completed till nearly thirty years after his death, that is, forty-six years in all, up to the commencement of our Lord's ministry. Some, however, understand the forty-six years here mentioned as referring to the time that elapsed from the laying of the foundations of the second temple, till its completion under the hands of Zerubbabel, and Joshua the high priest.

† From the time of Malachi the prophet—a period of four hundred and thirty-four years—“sixty-two weeks” in the language of Daniel's famous prophecy.

that the faith of numbers was yet but weak, and that, consequently, many would desert his cause when they found he was opposed by the Sanhedrin, or great Council of the nation, and did not set up a worldly kingdom, as they thought the expected Messiah was to do.

But the miracles wrought by the holy Jesus did not excite the wonder and astonishment of the common and illiterate class of the people alone. Nicodemus, a principal person among them, impartially reflecting on his wondrous works, so astonishing in their nature, so demonstrative in their proof, so salutary in their effect, so happily adapted to the confirmation of his doctrines, and so perfectly agreeable to the attributes of the Deity, as well as the predictions of the ancient prophets concerning the Messiah, “the Sun of righteousness, who was to rise with healing in his wings,” was perfectly assured that nothing less than Omnipotence itself could produce such wonders, and thence, like many others of his countrymen, almost concluded that Jesus was of a truth the Son, and *sent* of God—which last term is the meaning of the word *Messiah*. But scruples still arose in his mind when, on the other hand, he considered the obscurity of his birth and the meanness of his appearance, so different from the exalted notions the people of the Jews always entertained concerning this powerful Prince, who was to erect his throne in the mighty city of Jerusalem and subject to his dominion all the states and kingdoms of the earth. To obviate, therefore, these scruples, and solve these perplexing doubts, Nicodemus resolved on an interview with the blessed Jesus; but, choosing to conceal his visit from the other members of the Sanhedrin, who were greatly averse to his

person and doctrine, he chose the night as most convenient for that purpose.

His salutation of the mighty Redeemer of Israel was this : " Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." John iii. 2. Rabbi, I am sufficiently convinced that thou art immediately sent as a teacher from on high ; for nothing less than power divine could enable thee to perform the miracles which thou hast wrought in the presence of multitudes. But this salutation by no means implies that Nicodemus thought Jesus the great promised Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel ; nor could he obtain that knowledge effectually till it was revealed to him by the blessed Spirit of God.

We may observe that our Saviour, waiving all formality and circumlocution, which tend to no real profit, immediately preaches to this disguised rabbi the first great doctrine of Christianity, regeneration : " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, I declare unto thee, as a truth of the last importance : verily, verily, unless a man be regenerated in the spirit of his mind, have his will and affections transferred from earthly to spiritual objects, he cannot see the kingdom of God, which is holy and spiritual in its nature and enjoyments.

This was a mysterious doctrine to the rabbi, whose religious views extended no further than to rites and ceremonies, and were bounded by time and space. Besides, he thought the very position of our Lord an absurdity in terms. " How can a man be born when

he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Our Lord replies to this question, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The regeneration which I preach unto you is not of a bodily, but of a spiritual nature: unless a man embraces the Christian religion and doctrines, whose initiating ordinance is baptism, and becomes a subject of divine grace, he cannot be the subject of that glory, which consists not in earthly splendor and the gratification of the meaner passions, but in an exemption from whatever is earthly, sensual, and devilish, and the prosecution of whatever is heavenly, holy, and spiritual. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again;" wonder not at my doctrine of regeneration, which is designed to inform you that you derive no excellence from your boasted descent from Abraham—as such, you are merely earthly, subject to sins and infirmities of every kind—as well as to show that you must undergo a spiritual mental regeneration, a renovation of the heart, which changes the whole man and fits you for the participation of heavenly blessedness.

This important work is likewise spiritual in its operation, unseen by mortal eyes, being wrought on the mind or heart of man by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, which changes his nature, and, with respect to eternal things, makes him another, a new creature. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh,

and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Notwithstanding this explanation of the blessed Jesus, Nicodemus was so prepossessed with partiality toward the Jews, who, on account of their alliance to Abraham, thought they were the people of God, entitled to heaven, and consequently in no need of this new operation of the mind, called regeneration, that he again demanded, "How can these things be?" The divine instructor then reproves his dulness and misapprehension of what he had so clearly explained and propounded to him, especially as he was himself a teacher of the people, and one of the great Council of the nation. "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" The doctrines I deliver are not fiction and mere surmise, but founded on eternal truth, immediately revealed from God, and consistent with the will of Heaven. I am witness to the same, and therefore affirm that such testimony is sufficient to render them valid. But your prejudices still prevail, nor can your belief be conquered by all the arguments I can advance. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ;* and ye receive not our witness."

* It would seem from this emphatic language of our Lord, that he had personally witnessed the great change which he denominates the New Birth. This shows that it was already visible in its effects on individuals of his acquaintance. And who could these individuals be, if not the disciples of John, including those who had already become his own personal followers—Andrew and Peter, James and John, Philip and Nathaniel? This accords with the prophecy of the Angel as to the effect of the ministry of John the Baptist: "Many of the children of Israel shall he *turn to the Lord his God*;" for such conversion to God certainly implies regeneration. See Luke i. 16; 1 John ii. 29.

If this be so, it shows conclusively the great mistake of those who con-

If ye thus reject the first principles of the Christian religion, such as the necessity of regeneration, or the influence of the Spirit of God upon the heart of man, how will ye believe the sublimer truths I shall hereafter deliver concerning the kingdom of God, or state of the saints in glory? If I inform you of spiritual transactions in this lower world, and ye believe not, how can ye believe if I tell you of those things which relate solely to another and heavenly state? But, to confirm your belief in what I have delivered, know that my assured knowledge of these things is derived from the Father of Light, the God of Truth, by whom I am invested with gifts superior to any of the ancient prophets. No man hath ascended the regions of immortality, and descended from thence, but “the Son of Man:” consequently, no man but “the Son of Man” can, with truth and certainty, reveal the immediate will of the Father, who is in heaven. Your great lawgiver Moses ascended not there: Mount Sinai was the summit of his elevation; whereas the Son of Man, who was in heaven, and came down from thence with a divine commission to sinful mortals, had the most clear and convincing proofs of the will of his Almighty Father, penetrated into the designs of infinite wisdom and grace, and consequently must be higher than any prophet, being in a peculiar sense the Prophet of the most high God, or Angel of the Presence.

This divine preacher, who spake as no man ever

found the baptism of the Holy Ghost with regeneration; for that gracious enlargement and overflow of the spiritual life was an event yet future, reserved till the day of Pentecost, to glorify the ascended Saviour. John vii. 39; xvi. 7. Acts i. 4, 5; ii. 1-4.

spake, likewise labors to eradicate the favorite principle of the Jews: I mean, that of confining all blessings, temporal and eternal, to their own nation and people; as well as to show the vanity of their expecting the appearance of the Messiah in pomp and magnificence.*

To effect this glorious design, he lays open to the rabbi that it was agreeable both to the doctrines of Moses, as well as to the will of God, that the Redeemer, in this state of mortality, should be exposed to poverty and distress of every kind; that his conquests were not to be of a temporal nature, but over the hearts and wills of mankind; that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but heavenly Jerusalem; previous to which he was to shed his blood, as, by virtue of the same, all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth might pass into the heavenly world, and there, provided they relied on his merits and conformed their lives to the doctrines he preached, forever, enjoy that summit of bliss which through his sufferings was provided for them, by God himself, to all eternity.

This is the sum and substance of Christianity; this is the sum and substance of what our blessed Lord preached to Nicodemus, that great ruler and teacher of the Jews; a sermon comprehending the whole of what need be taught, notwithstanding religion is at this day

* How completely the Jews of that age (with few exceptions, as Zacharias and Simeon), had lost sight of the grand spiritual mission of their nation, and of the Messiah himself, is seen in this very narrowness and bigotry of spirit. Had they read the promises to their fathers aright; had they at all entered into the true spirit of their own Psalms and of their prophets, they must have perceived that in the seed of Abraham "all the families of the earth were to be blessed," and would have exulted, like Paul, afterward in the glorious prospect. Rom. xv. 9-12.

rent to pieces by sectaries, each of whom invents some new-fangled doctrine, suggested by ignorance, presumption, or both united.

God Almighty, the Father; out of his own unsolicited, unmerited grace and mercy to the sinful race of men, sent his only-begotten Son to purchase eternal life, through the effusion of his own blood, for all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth who should believe in him; that is, who should believe in the divinity of his mission, the efficacy of his atonement, and, in consequence of that faith, conform to the rules of his gospel. "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." Condemnation, justly passed on all transgressors of the law of God (which are all mankind) can alone be averted, according to the divine institution, the propriety of which it is the height of impiety and presumption to call in question, by faith in the blessed Jesus. Such a faith we have just explained. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

It appears from the future conduct of Nicodemus, that, instead of supposing Jesus to be only "a teacher come from God," he was now fully convinced that he was the "Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel;" for he afterward constantly espoused his cause in the great Council of the nation; and, when his countrymen put him to an ignominious death, he, together with Joseph of Arimathea, conveyed him to burial, when all others had forsaken him.

The time of the passover at Jerusalem being expired,

Jesus, together with his disciples, withdrew into the remote parts of Judea,* where he continued a considerable time, preaching the kingdom of God, and baptizing the new converts. John the Baptist being also at the same time baptizing in the river Enon,† a dispute arose

* It does not appear from the record that Jesus was in any obscurity during his first six months' ministry in Judea. On the contrary, it is affirmed that in this period, "he made and baptized more disciples than John," who had then modestly withdrawn from the Jordan to Enon.

† Enon is nowhere mentioned as a *river* in the Scriptures, nor, so far as we are aware, by any modern traveller. It is remarkable that no ancient writer appears to have identified the spot. Jerome indeed says, it was about eight miles south of Scythopolis (the ancient Bethshan), yet as no such town as Salim was in that neighborhood, his opinion lacks confirmation. All this proves the place was obscure.

The name Enon signifies a fountain—"The Dove's Fountain"—either from its soft, murmuring noise, or from being the resort of those beautiful birds. Three things are said by the Evangelist to aid us in finding the spot, at once so obscure, and yet so important as the scene of the Baptist's last labors and last public testimony to Christ. 1. It was near to a town called Salim. 2. There was much water there. 3. It was not far from Jerusalem; for a debate arose between John's disciples and the Jews of that city, which was referred to him for decision, and was the occasion of his most explicit testimony to the honor of Jesus, as from above and above all, the Head and Bridegroom of the Church. John iii. 25-36.

All these conditions unite to fix the place in the valley of the *Cherith*, a tributary of the Jordan; about six miles northeast of Jerusalem, and twelve northwest of Jericho. Dr. Barclay, the discoverer of the spot, describes it as a most secluded and charming spot, in a valley called by the Arabs, *Wady Faran*, or "the Valley of Delight," about a mile from the ruins of *Zaleim*, or Salim, which are on the summit of a hill to the north. Enon consists of a succession of beautiful fountains, broad and deep, cool and clear, shaded by overhanging trees. This is undoubtedly the spot where Elijah was hidden in the time of Ahab, and where the Baptist, for a season, retired from Bethabara, which was in the jurisdiction of Herod the Tetrarch, perhaps after that prince had taken offence at his just reproof. The evidence furnished by Dr. Barclay, seems to command the general consent of modern critics. See his "*City of the Great King*," Philadelphia, 1858.

between his disciples and certain Jews concerning the preference of the baptism of Jesus.

Being unable to decide the point, they referred it to the opinion of John; on which the pious Baptist immediately declared that he was only the harbinger of the great Messiah, who baptized not only with water but with the Holy Spirit; adding that his own ministry was on the decline, as the beauty of the morning star, the harbinger of the sun, decreases when that fountain of life but dawns in the chambers of the east.

The Baptist likewise mentioned to his disciples and hearers many circumstances tending to prove the divinity of the mission of the holy Jesus, and the important design of his incarnation: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Baptist, having publicly preached the great doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus, departed from the wilderness of Judea, where he had continued a considerable time, and went into Galilee, often repairing to the court of Herod, who esteemed, or affected to esteem, both his preaching and person.* But John, being

* Herod Antipas, here mentioned, was a son of Herod the Great, by his Samaritan wife, Malthace. On the death of his father, he was appointed by Augustus Cæsar to the government of Galilee, and of Perea, the region east of the lower Jordan. Hence, our Saviour belonged by residence to his jurisdiction, and John the Baptist at Bethabara, also, for the time. His first wife, daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, he divorced, in order to marry Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had seduced from her husband. Philip bore the cruel wrong in silence, but Aretas waged war against him, and defeated him with great slaughter. This, Josephus tells us, was regarded by the Jews as a judgment of God on Herod for his crimes against Philip, his divorced wife, and John the Bap-

faithful in his ministry, could not fail to remonstrate on the injustice and impiety of a known practice of Herod, —which was his cohabiting with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; and, thereby incurring the displeasure of that ambitious woman, he was at her instance cast into prison, and there reserved for future destruction.

While these things happened in Galilee, our blessed Lord continued preaching in the wilderness,* whither great numbers resorted, attracted by curiosity to see the miracles which fame reported he daily wrought. The success of his ministry exciting the envy of the hypocritical tribe of the Pharisees, our blessed Lord thought proper to retire into Galilee, in order to promote the design of his mission in those parts.†

In the course of his journey, being weary of travelling in so warm a country, and excessively thirsty, he sat down in Samaria by a celebrated well given by the old patriarch Jacob to his son Joseph, while his disciples were gone to the city Sychar to procure provisions.

While the humble Jesus was sitting by the well-side, a woman, a native of the country, came with her

tist, whom Herodias had persuaded him to kill, after he had long "heard him gladly, and done many things because of him; for he knew he was a just and holy man." As this last act was really against his conscience, it filled Herod with remorse and misery. To complete his punishment, Herodias persuaded him to go to Rome to get his title of Tetrarch elevated to that of King (which he sometimes was called by courtesy); but the result of his journey was his ruin, as the Emperor Claudius, on complaint of his own brother, Herod Agrippa I., decreed his deposition, and banishment to Lyons, in Gaul. Thus Herodias, for whom he had sacrificed his honor and conscience at first, became his evil genius and scourge to the end of life—a fearful example that "the way of transgressors is hard."

* See first note, page 76

† This was just after John's imprisonment, about January, A. D. 31.

pitcher to fetch water; and our Lord requested of her to give him to drink. The appearance of Jesus astonished the woman, because she knew him to be a Jew, and the Samaritans were held in the utmost contempt by those people, who, indeed, arrogated a preference to all nations upon earth. But, though she knew him to be a Jew, she knew not that he was the Son of God, full of grace and truth, divested of human prejudices, and the very essence of humility and every virtue. As the design of his mission and incarnation was to promote the real happiness of mankind, he embraced every opportunity of enforcing his salutary doctrines; and therefore, though his thirst was extreme, he delayed its gratification, in order to inform this woman, though of an infamous character, of the means by which she might obtain living water, or, in other words, eternal life. As the best method to effect this purpose, he gave her to understand that, had she known the character of the suppliant, she would have eagerly satisfied his desire, and been rewarded by a gift the most invaluable—even living water, issuing from the well of eternal salvation.

The woman, taking his words in the common acceptation, imagining that he suggested his power of supplying her with water flowing from a perpetual spring, which in that parched climate appeared impossible, demanded of him if he was vested with a power superior to their father Jacob, who dug this well, drank out of it with his family, and left it for the benefit of posterity.*

* A common Jew would have indignantly denied the claim of the Samaritans to a descent from Jacob. But Jesus passed it by without remark, that he might not be diverted from his great object.

The Saviour and friend of mankind, still benign in his purpose toward this poor sinner, replied that all who drank of the water of Jacob's well would thirst again, it being but a temporary allay of a desire incident to human nature; whereas those who drank of the water which he was ready to dispense should never thirst; because that water flowed from the inexhaustible Fountain of Divine Grace, and could not be drained but with immensity itself.

Though this great Preacher of Israel, by a simple and natural allegory, displayed the power of divine grace, the woman, ignorant of the allusion and meaning of the blessed Jesus, desired of him that water, that she might not thirst in future, nor have occasion to come to Jacob's well daily for water.

To show her the nature of sin, and thereby create in her soul desires after the water of life, the blessed Jesus, by some pertinent questions and replies, evinced his knowledge of her infamous course of life, and by that means convinced her that he acted under an influence more than human. To evade, however, the present subject of discourse, which filled her with a degree of awe and fear, she proposed for discussion a case long warmly contested between the Jews and Samaritans:*

* The Samaritans of that age were the descendants of a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles—a poor remnant of the ten tribes who had been carried away by Shalmanezar, king of Assyria, and colonies of heathen tribes transported from different parts of his empire. Their faith and worship was mixed, like their origin: “they feared Jehovah, and worshipped their idol gods.” On the return of the Jews from the captivity, and the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, they were necessarily excluded from the temple worship, and hence became bitter enemies of the Jews. They built a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim, where they

Whether Mount Gerizim, or the city of Jerusalem, was destined by God as the place peculiarly set apart for religious worship. Our blessed Lord replied to this insignificant question, that it was not the place, but the manner, in which adoration was offered to the Father of Spirits, that rendered such worship acceptable; observing that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24.

In consequence of this reply to her, which apparently referred to things spiritual and eternal, she informed the blessed Jesus of her expectation of the arrival of the promised Messiah, who should punctually inform them concerning these points, so long and indecisively contested.

Our Lord, embracing the opportunity of preaching himself to this poor woman as the Saviour of sinners, replied, without hesitation, "I that speak unto thee am he."

While Jesus continued talking with the woman, his disciples returned, and approached him at the very time when he told the woman that he was the Messiah. Though they were astonished at his condescension in

offered sacrifices according to the Mosaic law, adhering to the Pentateuch, but rejecting all other parts of Scripture.

About B. C. 120, John Hyrcanus, king of the Jews, conquered them, and burned their temple, which only increased their animosity. They still contended that Mount Gerizim was the proper place for temple worship, because it was "the mount of blessing," although the altar erected by Joshua was not on Gerizim, but on Mount Ebal. Hence the language of the woman of Samaria on this occasion—a hundred and fifty years after their temple had been destroyed. In common with the Jews, they expected the Messiah, but rather in the character of the great "Prophet" than of the great "King." Deut. xviii. 15–19; John iv. 25, 26.

The tenderness of Jesus toward this despised people on all occasions, is a remarkable and beautiful feature of his character.

conversing with an inhabitant of Samaria, and even of instructing her in the doctrines of religion, none presumed to ask him why he conversed with one who was an enemy to the Jews and the worship in the temple of Jerusalem. But the woman, hearing Jesus call himself the Messiah, left the pitcher, and ran into the city, to publish the glad tidings, that the great Deliverer of mankind was then sitting by the well of Jacob, and had told her all the secret transactions of her life. This report astonished the Samaritans, and at the same time roused their curiosity to see a person foretold by Moses and the prophets, and of whose appearance there was then so universal an expectation.

The disciples, on their return, set before their Master the provisions they had purchased; but he, wholly absorbed in meditation, refused the refreshment so highly requisite, telling them that he had "meat to eat that they knew not of." This unexpected answer surprised his disciples, who, understanding his words in their natural sense, asked one another whether any person had, during their absence, supplied him with provisions. But Jesus soon explained the mystery, by telling them that he did not mean natural, but spiritual, food; that to execute the commission he had received from his Father was far better to him than meat or drink; and the satisfaction he was going to receive from the conversion of the Samaritans much greater than any sensual enjoyments.

Many of the Samaritans were now near Jesus, who, lifting up his eyes, and seeing the ways crowded with people coming to him from the city, stretched out his benevolent hands toward them, and addressed his disci-

ples in the following manner: "Say not ye there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are already white unto harvest." (John iv. 35.) Behold yonder multitudes, how they are thronging to hear the word, which has only a few minutes been sown in their hearts! It is not, therefore, always necessary to wait with patience for the effect, which sometimes immediately follows the cause. To gather this spiritual harvest, and finish the work of him that sent me, is my proper food; adding, for the encouragement of his disciples, As you have labored with me in this harvest, so shall you participate in the great recompense of eternal rewards: "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together." John iv. 36.

Many of the people had been so affected at the words of the woman that they were fully persuaded Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah; accordingly, their first request was that he would deign to take up his residence in their city. The compassionate Redeemer of the human race so far complied as to stay with them two days—an interval which he spent in preaching to them the kingdom of God; so that the greatest part of the city embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and, at his departure, said unto the woman. "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." John iv. 42.

Having accomplished his gracious design in Samaria,

Jesus continued his journey to Galilee,* to exercise his ministry and preach there the kingdom of God ; telling the people that the time was now accomplished which had been predetermined by Omnipotence for erecting the happy kingdom of the Prince of Peace.† Mark i. 15.

Our Lord had performed several miracles at Jerusalem during the passover, at which the inhabitants of Galilee were present. His preaching was therefore at first attended with great success ; for they listened attentively to his doctrine, and received it with particular kindness and courtesy—especially the people of Cana, where he had turned the water into wine.

During his residence in that city, a nobleman of Capernaum came to him, requesting, with great humility and reverence, that he would come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death. Our blessed Saviour readily complied with the latter part of his request ; but, to remove a prejudice they had conceived, that it was necessary to be personally present in order to restore the sick person to health, he refused to go down to Capernaum, dismissing the father with this assurance, that his son was restored to health : “ Go thy way ; thy son liveth.” (John iv. 50.) The nobleman obeyed the

* Galilee, in the time of Christ, embraced all of Palestine north of Samaria and west of the Jordan. It was under the government of Herod Antipas, or Herod the Tetrarch, and was divided into Upper or Northern Galilee, which was quite mountainous, and Lower or Southern Galilee, which was quite fertile and populous. The latter was the residence of Jesus ; it comprehended the four tribes of Issacher, Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun, and contained over four hundred towns and villages, the least of which, according to Josephus, had a population of fifteen hundred souls. Here our Lord chiefly labored for about eighteen months, full one half of his public ministry.

† See note page 17.

word of Jesus, and immediately departed for his own house; but before his arrival he was met by his servants, with the joyful news that his son was recovered. On this the father inquired at what time they perceived an alteration for the better, and from their answer was satisfied that immediately after the words were spoken by the blessed Jesus the fever left him, and he was recovered in a miraculous manner. This amazing instance of his power and goodness abundantly convinced the nobleman and his family that Jesus was the true Messiah, the great Prophet so long promised to the world.

After some stay in the city and neighborhood of Cana, Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had spent the greater part of his youth, and, as his constant custom was, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and read that celebrated prediction of the Messiah in the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke iv. 18, 19.

It should be remembered that our blessed Saviour read this passage in the original Hebrew, which was then a dead language, and, as he had never been taught letters, could do it only by inspiration from above.*

* There is great force in this remark. For although the Septuagint Greek version was in extensive use, in the time of Christ, in the synagogues of Egypt and other foreign parts, it seems highly probable, if not certain, that in all parts of Palestine, not settled by Greek colonies, the Hebrew

But he did more: he explained the passage with such strength of reason and beauty of expression that the inhabitants of Nazareth, who well knew he had never been initiated into the rudiments of learning, heard him with astonishment. But, as he performed no miracle in their city, they were offended at him. Perhaps they thought the place of his residence should have been his peculiar care, and, as he could with a single word heal the sick at a distance, not a single person in Nazareth should have been afflicted with any kind of disease. That they really entertained sentiments of this kind seems plain from our Saviour's own words: "Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country;" evidently alluding to the great and benevolent miracle he had wrought on the nobleman's son.

But the holy Jesus, by enumerating the miracles that Jehovah had done in behalf of the widow of Sarepta, who was a heathen, and the inhabitant of an idolatrous city, in the time of famine, when many widows in Israel perished with hunger, and of Naaman the Syrian, who was cured of his leprosy by the prophet Elisha, when numbers of Jews, afflicted with the same loathsome disease, were suffered to continue in their uncleanness, sufficiently proved that the prophets had on some extraordinary occasions wrought miracles in favor of those

text was preserved and read in the synagogues. But as the vernacular tongue of the Jews of Palestine, at that time, was Aramean, or Syro-Chaldec, a corruption of the pure Hebrew, it became necessary to interpret the original text to the people, as well as to expound the meaning, as was done from the time of Ezra. Nehemiah viii. 8. Hence the wonder of the Jews at the ability of Jesus to do this: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John vii. 15.

whom the Israelites, from a fond conceit of their being the peculiar favorites of Heaven, judged unworthy of such marks of particular favor. The people were so incensed at this reply, that forgetting the sanctity of the Sabbath, they hurried him through the streets "to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built," intending to cast him headlong down the precipice. But the Son of God defeated their cruel intentions, by miraculously confounding their sight and withdrawing from the fury of these wretched people.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR LORD PROCEEDS TO CAPERNAUM—ADDS TO THE NUMBER OF HIS FOLLOWERS—PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL IN GALILEE—PREACHES TO A NUMEROUS AUDIENCE HIS WELL-KNOWN AND EXCELLENT DISCOURSE UPON THE MOUNT.

THE holy Jesus, aggrieved by the cruel Nazarenes, departed from them, and visited Capernaum, the capital of Galilee (on the borders of the Lake of Gennesaret,) which was a place highly convenient for his design;*

* Capernaum was situated at the northern part of that lovely region called Gennesaret, on the western shore of the sea of Galilee. It was sheltered from the north winds by a semi-circle of hills, and its delicious climate and soil brought together, within a district of ten square miles, the various products of the temperate zone and the tropics—the grape and the fig, the walnut and the palm. The lake spread out before the prospect, blue and beautiful, to the abrupt boundary of its eastern hills, and its waters abounded with the finest fish in the world.

for, besides the numerous inhabitants of the city, the trading towns on the lake were crowded with strangers, who, after hearing the doctrine of the gospel preached by the great Redeemer of mankind, would not fail to spread in their respective countries the happy tidings of salvation.

While Jesus tarried at Capernaum, he usually taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath day, preaching with such energy of power as greatly astonished the whole congregation. He did not, however, constantly confine himself to that city; the adjacent country was often blessed with his presence and cheered with the heavenly words of his mouth.

In one of the neighboring villages he called Simon and Andrew, who were following their occupation of fishing on the lake, to accompany him. These disciples, who had before been acquainted with him, readily obeyed the heavenly mandate, and followed the Saviour of the world. Soon after, he saw James and John, who were also fishing on the lake, and called them also. Nor did they hesitate to follow the great Redeemer of mankind; and, from their ready compliance, there is reason to believe that they, as well as Simon and Andrew, were acquainted with Jesus at Jordan, unless we suppose (which is far from being improbable) that their readiness proceeded from the secret energy of his power upon their minds. But, however this be, the four disciples accompanied our blessed Saviour to Capernaum, and soon after to different parts of Galilee.

How long our Lord was on this journey cannot be determined: all the evangelists have mentioned is, that he wrought a great number of miracles on diseased

persons, and that the fame of these wonderful works drew people from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Nor was the knowledge of these miracles concealed from the heathen, particularly the inhabitants of Syria; for they also brought their sick to Galilee to be healed by him. Consequently, the time our blessed Saviour spent in these tours must have been considerable, though the evangelists have said very little concerning it.

But, whatever time was spent in these benevolent actions, the prodigious multitudes which flocked to him from every quarter moved his compassion toward those who were bewildered in the darkness of ignorance, and determined him to preach to them "the words of eternal life."

For this blessed purpose, he ascended a mountain in that neighborhood; and, placing himself on an eminence, from whence he could be heard by throngs of people attending him, he inculcated, in an amazingly pathetic manner, the most important points of religion.*

* The Sermon on the Mount was probably delivered in the spring of A.D. 31, and ranks next in importance, if not in time, to the call of the Twelve Apostles.

The place where such vital words were first uttered, is still called the Mount of Beatitudes. It rises at no great distance northwest of Capernaum, and commands a fine view of the sea of Galilee from shore to shore. From its peculiar form it is called *Haïrem Hattin*, or the Horns of Hattin, having two summits with a depression between them. The ascent is steep and rocky, but the depression between the summits afforded ample room for the great Teacher and the multitudes that followed him.

At this season of the year the landscape was diversified with all the beauty of spring in that delicious climate, and the charms of Nature lent all their aid to the lessons of truth and grace, which fell from the lips of Jesus. Here might be seen in one direction the red newly ploughed soil, there, the yellow or whitening harvest, ripening in the sun, prophetic of

He opened his excellent sermon with the doctrine of happiness—a subject which the teachers of wisdom have always considered as the principal object in morals, and employed their utmost abilities to convey a clear idea of it to their disciples, but differed very remarkably with regard to the particulars in which it consisted. The Jews were in general persuaded that the enjoyments of sense were the sovereign good. Riches, conquest, liberty, mirth, women, fame, revenge, and other things of the same kind, afforded them such pleasures that they wished for no better in the Messiah's kingdom, which they all considered as a secular one, and that a “golden,” instead of a “sceptre of righteousness,” would have been the “sceptre of his kingdom.” Nay, some of the disciples themselves retained for a time the like kind of notion, till they were convinced of their mistake by the spirit, word, and conduct of their divine Master.

Our Lord and Master, therefore, to show his hearers in general, and his disciples in particular, the grossness of their error, declared, that the highest happiness of

the fruits to spring from the Saviour's doctrine in after years, when the handful of corn planted by Him on the tops of the mountains shall yield a product that shall shake like Lebanon. Yonder are fields green with grass or springing grain, while lower still the gorgeous hues of the lily of the valley suggest to the mind the Hand that arrays them in more than the glory of Solomon, and overhead the blue air is ringing with the music of the birds, who, without storehouse or barn, proclaim to the world the ceaseless bounty of an ever-watchful Providence. From scenes and objects like these did the great Teacher illustrate and enforce his wondrous lessons—lessons, which must have become forever after associated in the minds of his hearers with the circumstances of the time and with the scenery of the place. But it was the lessons themselves which chiefly riveted their thoughts; from the circumference of creation he struck to the centre of their hearts, and “He spoke as One having authority, and not as the Scribes.”

man consisted in the graces of the Spirit, because from the possession and exercise of them, the purest pleasures result; pleasures which satisfy even the Almighty himself, and constitute his ineffable felicity.

The rich, the great, the proud, said the Redeemer of mankind in whom the wisdom of God was fully displayed, are not happy, as you imagine; they are always wishing for what they cannot obtain; and their disappointments are poisoned arrows, festering in their breasts. On the contrary, the poor in spirit are the truly happy, who, depending on divine grace for the supply of their spiritual wants, discharge the duties of their station, whatever it be, with virtue and integrity. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The jocose and flighty are not the happy, but on the contrary, the afflicted, provided they rightly improve their afflictions; that is, if they are excited by them to mourn for their sins, forsake their wicked courses, and seek a better life. Affliction awakens the most serious thoughts in the mind; composes it into a grave and settled frame, very different from the levity inspired by prosperity: it gives a fellow-feeling of the sorrows of others; and makes it thoroughly sensible of the danger of departing from God, the source and centre of all its joys. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Nor are the passionate happy; but on the contrary, the meek. Those who have subdued their temper can patiently bear provocation, and are strangers to that destructive passion, envy. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Men, through vanity and blindness, consider those as happy who enjoy the pleasures of this life, by rioting in luxury and excess. But this is far from being the case; on the contrary, those are the truly happy who have the most vehement desire of treading the paths of virtue and religion. For they, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, shall obtain every thing they desire. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Forgiveness, not resentment, for injuries done, is the spring of happiness; and those who are of a humane and beneficent disposition, rejoice when they can perform a benevolent action, especially to their fellow-mortals in distress; the pleasure is godlike; it is divine. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Sensuality, is a subjection to the appetite; only those who have mortified their carnal appetites, enjoy an inward purity of mind. With what delight do we behold the glories of the sun, and contemplate the beautiful scenes of nature that surround us! But what proportion has this to the ineffable delights that must fill the minds of those who behold the great Creator himself. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The tyrants and conquerors of the earth, who disturb the peace of mankind, are far from happy: it falls to the share of those who love their fellow-creatures, and do all in their power to promote peace and harmony among the children of men. "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Nor does happiness consist in liberty and ease, if those

privileges are purchased at the expense of virtue. Those who have suffered the severest trial that human nature is capable of sustaining, from purity of heart, and for conscience' sake, shall be honored with the highest rewards in the blissful mansions of eternity. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Contentment is not to be expected from the applause of the world; but will be the portion of those who are falsely reviled for their righteousness, and share in the affronts offered to God himself; for by these persecutions the prophets of all ages have been distinguished. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew v. 11, 12.

These are the declarations, with regard to happiness, made by the Son of God: and surely we may believe the words of him who came down from heaven; and who, in compassion to our infirmities, took upon himself our nature; and to redeem us from the power of sin and death, offered himself a sacrifice on the cross, and thereby opened to us the gates of eternal life.

Having shown in what true happiness consisted, our Saviour addressed himself to his disciples, and explained their duty as the teachers appointed to conduct others in the paths that lead to eternal felicity, and excited them to diligence in dispensing the salutary influences of their doctrine and example, that their hearers might honor and praise the great Creator of heaven and earth,

who had been so kind to the children of men. As his definition of happiness was very different from what the Jews were accustomed to hear from the Scribes and Pharisees,* he thought proper to declare that he was not come to destroy the moral precepts contained in the law and the prophets, but to fulfil or confirm them.

Nothing is so steadfast as the eternal truths of morality: the heavens may pass away, and the whole frame of nature be dissolved, but the rules of righteousness shall remain immutable and immortal. And, therefore, he ordered his disciples, on the severest penalties, to enforce, both by preaching and example, the strict observance of all the moral precepts contained in the sacred writings, and that in a much greater breadth than they were taken by the teachers of Israel; and, in consider-

* The Scribes are often mentioned in conjunction with the Pharisees in the New Testament. But they were not a separate sect in religion, they were only a distinct profession, devoted to the cultivation of letters; writers, or literary men. Most of them were of the priestly tribe of Levi. These constituted the class of learned men; some transcribed, studied, and expounded the Scriptures, and were hence called "lawyers," or teachers of the Law. Members of the great Sanhedrin, or Jewish Senate, were often chosen from this class. They sprang up after the release from the Babylonish Captivity, and hence had been flourishing for more than five hundred years at the birth of our Lord. On them it specially devolved to preserve the sacred text from all errors and corruptions.

An inferior class of Scribes were public notaries in the Sanhedrin and courts of justice, keepers of genealogies in the temple, and registers in the synagogues.

As a body, however, the Scribes were held in high repute among the people, and one of them even won the commendation of Christ for his correct view of the Law of God. Mark xii. 28. As expounders of the Law, they are said to "sit in Moses' seat," Matt. xxiii. 2; but their best teachings were wanting in the enforcement of a good example, and their teaching in general was radically defective in depth and spiritual insight. Matt. v. 20; vii. 29.

ation of the frailties of human nature, taught them that excellent form of prayer which has been used by Christians of most denominations to this very day :* “Our Father,” &c.

If earthly parents are called fathers, the Almighty has the best title from every creature, and particularly from men, being the Father of their spirits, the Maker of their bodies, and the continual Preserver of both. “Father” is the most magnificent title invented by poets and philosophers in honor of their gods : it conveys the most lively idea possible to the human breast. As it is used by mankind in general, it marks the essential character of the true God ; namely, that he is the First Cause of all things, or the Author of our being, and at the same time conveys a strong idea of the tender love he bears to his creatures, whom he nourishes with an affection and protects with a watchfulness infinitely superior to that of an earthly parent. The name of Father also teaches us that we owe our being to God, points out his goodness and mercy in upholding us, and expresses his power in giving us the things we ask. Nor is this all : we are likewise taught to give our Maker the title of Father, that our sense of the tender relation in which he stands to us may be confirmed, our

* Nothing in the New Testament appears to teach us that our Saviour designed to limit us to these very words as a stated form of prayer. And yet considered merely as a form, the world might be challenged to produce any thing half so comprehensive and concise. Considered as a model, or index of the subjects of petition acceptable to God, can any thing be conceived more suggestive than the nature, order, and relative rank of these petitions ? The glory of God and the salvation of mankind take precedence of every domestic or personal concern. Our bodily wants how limited ! Our spiritual wants how various and how great !

faith in his power and goodness strengthened, our hopes of obtaining what we ask in prayer cherished, and our desire of obeying and imitating him quickened; for the light of nature teaches us that it is disgraceful in children to degenerate from their parents, and that they cannot commit a greater crime than to disobey the commands of an indulgent father.

Lastly, we are commanded in the plural number, to call him Father (and that even in our secret addresses to the throne of grace), to put us in mind that we are all brethren, the children of one common Parent, and that we ought to love one another with sincerity, as we pray not for ourselves only, but for all the human race.

“Who art in heaven.” The words do not suppose the presence of God confined: he is present everywhere,—about our paths, about our bed,—and narrowly inspecteth every action of the sons of men. But they express his majesty and power, and distinguish him from those we call fathers upon earth, and from false gods, which are not in heaven, the happy mansion of bliss and felicity,—where the Almighty, who is essentially present in every part of the universe, gives more especial manifestation of his presence to such of his creatures as he hath exalted to share with him in the eternal felicities of the heavenly Jerusalem.

“Hallowed be thy name.” By the name of God the Hebrews understood God himself, his attributes, and his works; and therefore the meaning of the petition is, May thy existence be universally believed, thy perfections loved and imitated, thy works admired, thy supremacy over all things acknowledged, thy providence revered and confided in! May all the sons of men

think so highly of his divine majesty, of his attributes, of his works, and may we so express our veneration for God, that his glory may be manifested in every corner of the world!

“Thy kingdom come.” Let the kingdom of the Messiah be extended to the utmost parts of the earth, that all the children of men “may become one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” May thy will, O thou great Father of the universe, be made known to us by the light of thy glorious gospel, and thy Holy Spirit so bestowed, that we may be enabled to imitate the angels of light, by giving us sincere, universal, and constant obedience to thy divine commands as they.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Give us from time to time such wholesome and proper food that we may be enabled to worship thee with cheerfulness and serve thee with vigor.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” The Almighty, as Supreme Governor of the universe, has a right to support his government by punishing those who transgress his laws. The suffering of punishment, therefore, is a debt which sinners owe to the divine justice; so that when we ask God, in prayer, to forgive our debts, we beg that he would be mercifully pleased to remit the punishment of all our sins, and that, laying aside his displeasure, he would receive us into favor and bless us with life eternal. In this petition, therefore, we confess our sins and express the sense we have of their guilt, namely, that they deserve death; and surely nothing can be more proper than such a con-

fession in our addresses to God ; because humility and a sense of our unworthiness, when we ask favors of the Almighty, whether spiritual or temporal, have a tendency to draw forth the goodness of God in bestowing them upon us.

The terms of this petition are worthy our notice : "Forgive us only as we forgive." We must forgive others if we hope ourselves to be forgiven, and are permitted to crave from God such forgiveness only as we grant to others ; so that, if we do not forgive even our enemies, we seriously and solemnly implore the Almighty to condemn us to the punishment of eternal death. How remarkably careful therefore, should men be to purge their hearts from all rancor and malice before they enter the temple of the Almighty to offer up their prayers to the throne of grace !

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." That is, do not lead us into such temptations as are too hard for human nature ; "but deliver us," by some means, from the evil, either by removing the temptation, or increasing our strength to resist it. This petition teaches us to preserve a sense of our own inability to repel and overcome the solicitations of the world, and of the necessity there is of our receiving assistance from above, both to regulate our passions and enable us to prosecute a religious life.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." Because the government of the universe is thine forever, and thou alone possessest the power of answering our manifold petitions and because the glory of thine infinite perfections remains eternally with thee, therefore all men ought to hallow thy name submit

themselves to thy government, and perform thy will, and, in an humble sense of their dependence, seek from thee the supply of their wants, the pardon of their sins, and the kind protection of thy providence.

This is emphatically called the Lord's prayer, because delivered by the Son of God himself; and therefore we should do well to understand it thoroughly, that when we enter the temple of the Lord, and address him in solemn prayer, we may have hopes that he will grant our petitions. And, above all, not to harbor in our breasts the least envy or malice against any who have offended us; for it is only on a supposition that we have forgiven others that we may have the least reason to hope of obtaining forgiveness from the Great Creator.

The divine Preacher proceeded to disclose the great duty of fasting, in which he directed them not to follow the hypocrites, in disfiguring their faces and clothing themselves in the melancholy weeds of sorrow, but each to be chiefly solicitous to appear before God as one that truly fasteth. Then will the Almighty, who constantly surrounds us, and is acquainted even with the most secret thoughts of our hearts, openly bestow upon us the reward of a true penitence: mortification, contrition, and humility he can discern, without the external appearance of sorrow and repentance. It must, however, be remembered that our blessed Saviour is here speaking of private fasting, and to this alone his directions are to be applied; for when we are called upon to mourn over public sins or calamities it ought to be performed in the most public manner.

Heavenly-mindedness was the next virtue inculcated by the blessed Jesus; and this he recommended with

peculiar earnestness, because the Jewish doctors were in general strangers to this grace, in which he was desirous his followers should be clothed, as being the most excellent ornament for a teacher of righteousness. This virtue is strenuously recommended by our blessed Saviour, by showing the deformity of its opposite, covetousness, which has only perishable things for its object. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matt. vi. 19-21.

More solid happiness will accrue from depositing your treasures in heaven, than in laying them up on earth, where they are subject to a thousand disasters, and even at best can remain only for a short series of years; whereas those laid up in heaven are permanent, and will lead to a "crown of glory that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." Nor let any man be so foolish as to think he can place his heart on the happiness of a future life when his treasures are deposited in this vale of misery; for wherever are laid up the goods which his soul desireth, there his heart and affections will also remain. If, therefore, ye are desirous of sharing in the joys of eternity, you must lay up your treasures in the "mansions of my Father's kingdom."

Lest they should imagine it was possible to be both heavenly-minded and covetous at the same time, he assured them that this was fully as absurd as to imagine that a person could at the same time serve and divide

his affections equally between two masters of opposite characters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Matt. vi. 24.

To strengthen this doctrine, he added a few plain, evident instances of the power, perfection, and extent of God’s providence, in which his tender care for the least and weakest of his creatures shines with a remarkable lustre, demonstrating the wise and parental attention of the Deity to all the creatures of his hand. He desired them to observe the birds of the air, the lilies, and even the grass of the field—leading his most illiterate hearers to form a more elevated and extensive idea of the divine government than the philosophers had attained; who, though they allowed in general that the world was governed by God, had very confused notions of his providence with regard to every individual creature and action. He taught them that the Almighty Father of the whole is the guardian and protector of the universe; that every action is subject to his will, and nothing left to the blind determination of chance.*

* “There is no foundation for the usual distinction between a general and a particular Providence; for so intimate are the natural dependencies of animate and inanimate creation, that no providence can be general, which includes not every individual being; and the same arguments which prove that God takes notice of any thing, prove that his providence extends equally to all.

“It is common enough to hear the providence of God generally and indistinctly acknowledged in extraordinary events, especially in those which bear with them an impressive character of moral retribution. But this is very different from the habitual enduring persuasion of the unlimited and uninterrupted providence of God in every thing which attends the Christian; in sorrow and in joy, in security and in danger, in private and in public, in our business and our devotions, in youth and in age, in time and in eternity.”—*J. S. Bucknenster.*

And if we direct our lives according to the divine will, we have surely no reason to be anxious about the necessities of life. "Behold," says the blessed Jesus, "the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they ?" Matt. vi. 26.

Be ye anxiously solicitous to obtain the happiness of the life to come ; and all the good things of this life shall, in the course of divine Providence, be added unto you. Matt. vi. 33.

Our Lord then prohibited all rash and uncharitable censure, either with regard to the characters of others in general, or their actions in particular : lest, in doing so, both God and man resent the injury. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Matt. vii. 1, 2.

An entire reformation in themselves, in particular, is absolutely necessary in those whose office it is to reprove and reform their brethren. And surely, nothing can be more preposterous, than to condemn in others what we practice ourselves ; or to set up for reformers of the world, when we ourselves are contaminated with the most enormous vices. With what countenance can we undertake to rebuke others for small faults, when we are ourselves plunged in the most detestable pollutions ? Well might the Redeemer of the world say, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye ; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matt. vii. 5.

Our blessed Saviour added : "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matt. vii. 6. Do not reprove men of a snarling disposition, as the attempt, instead of having the happy effects intended, will but provoke them to pursue their wickedness with greater boldness than ever. You may warn others against their company and example, you may weep over them, and you may pray to your heavenly Father for them ; but you cannot reprove them with safety, or any hopes of success.

Lest the disciples should think that these precepts were not to be attained by human nature, he directed them to apply to God for the assistance of his Spirit, together with all the other blessings necessary to their salvation ; adding the noblest precept of morality that was ever delivered by any teacher, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets." Matt. vii. 12. How clear a rule of duty is this, and how easy and applicable to practice ! Look into your own breast, and do as you would be done by, in the same condition.

Having enforced these heavenly precepts, he exhorted them to place an humble dependence on the Spirit, to strive to practice the precepts of religion, however difficult the task might appear. "Enter ye in at the strait gate ; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matt. vii. 13, 14. How strait indeed is the gate

and narrow is the way that leadeth to life! In the way nothing is to be found that flatters the flesh, but many things that have a tendency to mortify it—poverty, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity, sobriety. And with regard to the gate, it receives none that are puffed up with the glory of this life, none that are indulging in luxury; it does not admit those that love riches or are encumbered with the goods of this world. None can pass through it but those who renounce all worldly lust and are resolved to forsake all sin. There is, however, no reason for us to despair of entering through this heavenly portal: if we sincerely endeavor, the assistance of the Holy Spirit will be freely given us, and we shall safely pass through the “strait gate,” and pursue our journey with ease along the “narrow path” till we arrive at the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

But lest evil-minded men, under the mask of piety and religion, should endeavor to draw them from the paths of righteousness, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples to beware of such persons, and carefully make the strictest scrutiny into their lives and doctrines.

Our Lord closes his sermon with the parable of the houses built on different foundations; intimating that the bare knowledge, or the simple hearing, of the divinest lessons of the truth ever delivered—nay, even the belief of these instructions, without the practice of them—is of no manner of importance. Religion—vital and practical religion, resting on the immutable authority of Christ alone,—is the foundation which can so firmly establish us that we cannot be shaken by all the tempests of afflictions, temptations, and persecutions of

the present age. It is this foundation alone, which, like a flinty rock on the eternal basis of the mountains, can support us in the day of trial. This alone can enable us to frustrate the attempts of men and devils, and patiently endure all the troubles of mortality.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR BLESSED LORD CURES THE LEPROSY AND PALSY—CASTS OUT A DEVIL—SUCCORS THE MOTHER-IN-LAW OF PETER, AND AFTERWARD PURSUES HIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE COUNTRY OF GALILEE.

THE great Preacher of Israel, having finished his excellent discourse, came down from the mountain, surrounded by a multitude of people, who had listened with astonishment to the doctrines he delivered, which were soon confirmed by divers miracles. A leper met him in his way to Capernaum, and being, doubtless, acquainted with the wondrous works he had already performed, threw himself, with great humility, before the Son of God, using this remarkable expression: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

The species of leprosy common among the Jews and the other Eastern nations was equally nauseous and infectious; but this was so far from preventing the blessed Jesus from approaching so loathsome an object, that it

increased his pity: he even touched him; but, instead of being polluted himself, the leper was instantly cleansed; and he departed glorifying God.

The evangelist adds that Jesus forbade him to tell any person what had been done, but repair immediately to the priest and offer the gift commanded by Moses.

Having performed the cure on the leper, our blessed Lord proceeded to Capernaum; but as he entered the city he was met by a Roman centurion, who represented to him, in the most pathetic manner, the deplorable condition of his servant, who was grievously afflicted with a palsy. The compassionate Redeemer of the world listened attentively to his complaint, and immediately told him he would come and heal him. The centurion thought this a great condescension to one who was not of the seed of Jacob, and therefore told him that he did not mean he should give himself the trouble of going to his house, as this was an honor he had not the least reason to expect, he being confident that his word alone would be sufficient—diseases and devils being as much subject to his commands as his soldiers were to him.*

Our Lord was amazed at these words; not that he was ignorant of the centurion's faith, or the basis on which it was built: he well knew the thoughts of his heart long before he uttered his request; but he was filled with admiration at the just and exalted idea the Roman officer had conceived of his power; and, to make his faith the more conspicuous, he gave it the praise it

* A Roman garrison was stationed at Capernaum and in other cities of Galilee, to prevent disturbances.

so justly deserved : “ Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” Matt. viii. 10.

This centurion doubtless relied upon the miracle Jesus had before wrought upon the nobleman’s son ; but the excellency and peculiarity of it consisted in applying the most grand ideas of superior power to Jesus, who according to outward appearance was only one of the sons of men.

This exalted faith induced the blessed Jesus to declare the gracious intentions of his Almighty Father with regard to the Gentiles ; namely, that he would as readily accept their faith as that of the Jews, and place them with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven ; while those who boasted of being the offspring of these great patriarchs, but fell far short of the heathen in faith, should be excluded from the blissful seats of Paradise. “ And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven : but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. viii. 11, 12.

Having thus addressed the multitude, the blessed Jesus turned himself to the centurion, and said, “ Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” The idea thou hast conceived of my power is just, though remarkably great ; as a reward for thy faith I grant the petition thou hast asked of me. “ And,” the evangelist adds, “ his servant was healed in the self-same hour.” Matt. viii. 13.

On the succeeding Sabbath, our Saviour went into the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum, and taught the people,

delivering his instructions in so graceful and elegant a manner that they were all astonished; and, to increase their admiration, one of the congregation, possessed with an unclean spirit, cried out, in a terrible manner, "Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?*" I

* Nothing marks more strongly the Sadducean spirit of this age, than the levity or scorn with which many treat the revealed doctrine of the existence and agency of Evil Spirits—a doctrine pervading the entire sacred volume from the time of Moses and Job to the Apocalypse of St. John. Whatever superstitious notions or customs may have been grafted upon it among the Heathen, the Jews, or Christians, the Scriptural doctrine is totally free from them; but it there stands forth as a stupendous and solemn fact, inseparably interwoven with human history. We are told of their creation and fall; their confederacy and government; many of their names, numbers, and orders; their malicious designs and employments; their great intelligence and subtlety; their fearful, though limited power; their prepared punishment; the new hazards their influence adds to human probation, though man is still justly responsible for following their instigations, and is, without repentance and faith in the Redeemer, liable to share their doom. They tempt by terror and bodily torture, as well as by seductive errors, as we see in the case of Job and of the demoniacs of the New Testament. None are more fully under the power of evil spirits than those, who, in the face of such various and ample testimony, deny their existence and agency.

But why, it has been said, was their power in bodily possession so prominent in Palestine, just in the age of Christ? Suppose we were unable to answer, it would only prove that it belongs to the immense class of unexplained, but undeniable facts. Yet if it were the object of the manifestation of the Son of God "to destroy the works of the devil," this may suggest the true solution. In all other parts of the world, Satan had succeeded in establishing idolatry securely, by the power of the State; in Palestine alone idolatry was resisted. There, too, was the centre where Christ was to strike the blow designed to shatter and overthrow the whole kingdom of evil. How natural, then, if that fallen Intelligence understood so much as this, that he should there muster his main forces to resist the onset, and that the All Wise should permit it for the very purpose of making his defeat the more conspicuous and decisive. (Compare Luke xi. 14-22 with x. 17-20.) That Satan did know the design of the Saviour,

know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Mark i. 24.

But the blessed Jesus, who wanted the testimony of no such confessors, commanded him to keep silence, and immediately come out of the man—which command the evil spirit instantly obeyed, to the great surprise and astonishment of all the spectators.

The enemies of the gospel have always endeavored to depreciate our Saviour's miracles, pretending that no more is meant by a person possessed of a devil than that he was afflicted with some loathsome disease, and that because sepulchres were considered as polluted places, therefore whenever any melancholy person frequented them they were said to be possessed with unclean spirits.

To this objection—namely, that the demoniacs were in reality nothing more than persons afflicted with some loathsome disease—we reply, it is evidently false, the evangelists having taken care to be very particular on this head.* "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases, and those which

and that his fallen subordinates understood and feared it too, is quite evident from the outcry of the unclean spirit, "Art thou come to destroy us?"

* It should not be forgotten that one of the evangelists (Luke) was an educated physician, and that he well understood the difference between real lunacy or epilepsy and demoniac possessions, so clearly distinguished in the sacred narrative. That certain effects of the one resemble those of the others, proves nothing as to the identity of the causes. In order to prove this, *all* the symptoms must coincide; which here is not the case. Demoniac possession stands distinctly apart in the New Testament from any form of disease whatever; and it were idle to say that He whose word controlled it, did not understand its nature, and refer it to its real cause. On this subject absolute unbelief of the history, or absolute belief of it in every part, as bearing the stamp of Divine authority, is alone consistent.

were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." Matt. iv. 24. "He gave to the apostles power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Matt. x. 1. And, accordingly, "he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils." Mark i. 34.

Having performed this astonishing miracle in the synagogue, our Lord returned to Peter's house, where he found his wife's mother sick of a fever. At his rebuke the fever immediately left her, so that she arose and administered to him. After sunset the door of the house was thronged by crowds of people seeking relief, and the compassionate Saviour healed them all; thus fulfilling the prophecy, "He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."

But the vast concourse of people that now gathered round him in Capernaum began to be troublesome, and he retired into a desert, whither the multitude soon followed him and entreated him never to depart from them. But, as this request was inconsistent with the design of his mission, he, for the first time, refused their request, and "preached in the synagogues of Galilee." Luke iv. 44.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS CONFIRMS HIS MISSION BY PRODUCING A MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES—CURING THE LEPROSY A SECOND TIME—APPEASING THE BOISTEROUS WAVES—CASTING DEVILS OUT OF DIVERS PERSONS GRIEVOUSLY POSSESSED.

OUR blessed Lord, having spread his glorious doctrine throughout Galilee, returned to Capernaum, followed by such numbers of people that he found it necessary to step into Peter's ship, from whence he taught the multitude, who stood on the shore listening with great attention to his doctrine.

Having concluded his discourse, he turned himself to Simon Peter, desiring him to launch out farther from the shore and let down his net; on which the disciple told him of the unsuccessful pains they had taken during the whole night, but added that he would, in obedience to his command, make one trial more. Nor had he any cause to repent; for the net was no sooner in the lake than they found it so full of large fishes that it was in danger of breaking.

This success after such fruitless toil astonished Peter, who, falling down at the feet of Jesus, cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He was conscious of the many sins he had been guilty of, and therefore afraid of being in the company of so divine a person, lest some offence might have exposed him to more than ordinary chastisement.

But the benevolent Redeemer of mankind removed his fears by telling him that from thenceforth the em-

ployment for him and his companions should be far more noble : they should catch men ; that is, they should turn them from the crooked paths of iniquity to the straight road leading to the heavenly mansions.

In one of the cities through which he passed, he found “ a man full of leprosy,” who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, “ Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

It was the custom in Judea for the priest to banish from society those who were afflicted with a contagious leprosy. The disease of this person, therefore, was of a less pestilential kind, as he was suffered to join the conversation of men. His case, however, excited the pity of the compassionate Jesus, who immediately cleansed him, ordered him to repair to Jerusalem, and, after showing himself to the priest, offer the gifts commanded by Moses, giving him the same admonition he had done to others—namely, not to tell any man what had been done for him. But the blessing he had received was so great and unexpected, that, instead of concealing, he published everywhere the great things Jesus had done for him, which brought such crowds to the Son of God that he was obliged to retire from Capernaum into the wilderness, to refresh his body with rest and his spirit with prayer and meditation.

The generality of commentators suppose that this leper, and the other mentioned in the previous chapter, are one and the same person ; but this is a mistake. The former was cured in the fields, the latter in the city. After cleansing the first, Jesus went to Capernaum and healed the centurion’s servant ; but after curing the latter he retired into the wilderness, to shun

the prodigious crowds which soon gathered round him from the leper's publishing everywhere the miracle Jesus had wrought for him.

Our blessed Lord, finding all his endeavors to conceal himself in the desert would be in vain, ordered his disciples to accompany him to the other side of the lake, upon which a certain Scribe who happened to be present declared he would follow him; but Jesus, who well knew that his desire was only to gain the profits and advantages of an earthly kingdom which he supposed the Messiah would establish, told him, if he intended nothing more by following him than to improve his worldly fortune, he would find himself wretchedly mistaken. "The foxes have holes," said the blessed Jesus to this teacher of Israel, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Matt. viii. 20.

The disciples, having prepared the ship, took on board their Master, and departed for the other side of the lake, attended by many boats full of people, who were desirous of hearing his heavenly discourses and of being spectators of his astonishing works. But Jesus, being fatigued with the labors of the day, set himself down at the stern of the ship and fell asleep.

The weather, which had till now been calm and serene, suddenly changed.* A terrible storm came on,

* The sea of Galilee is a beautiful sheet of water, about fourteen miles long, and seven in breadth. It lies in a deep basin, surrounded by hills from five hundred to one thousand feet high. It is one hundred and sixty five feet in depth. Though protected from the winds, in some degree, by its sheltered situation, it is liable to sudden gusts, that sweep down the gorges of the hills, and often rise into violent tempests. Modern travellers, venturing out on the lake, have been overtaken in the same manner as is here described.

and the rising waves dashed impetuously against the ship, threatening every moment to bury them all in the bowels of the deep. The darkness of night increased the horrors of the tempest. Now they were carried on the top of the mountainous waves and seemed to touch the skies, then plunged to the bottom of the deep, while the foaming billows roared horridly above them. In vain the disciples exerted their utmost strength: the storm continued to increase, and baffled all the efforts of human exertion; the waves broke over the ship, the waters rushed in, and she began to sink. All hope of escaping had vanished; despair seized every individual, and they were on the brink of perishing, when they ran to Jesus, crying out, "Master, Master, we perish!" Their vehement cries roused him from his sleep. He raised his hand, so often employed in acts of mercy and benevolence, and, with a stern and awful voice, rebuked the boisterous elements. The raging sea instantly obeyed his command. The aerial torrent stopped short in its impetuous course, and became as silent as the grave, while the mountainous waves sunk at once into their beds, and the surface of the deep became as smooth as polished marble.

The disciples had before seen their great Master perform many miracles, and, therefore, had abundant reason to rely wholly on his power and goodness. But in the excitement of the moment, they seem to have forgotten the power of their Master, and when human effort failed, to have abandoned all hopes of life. The blessed Jesus, therefore, very justly rebuked them: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Why should ye doubt of my power to protect you? The voyage was

undertaken at my command, and therefore you should have been confident that I would not suffer you to perish in it. The confused disciples, unable to recover from their astonishment, answered nothing, but could not help saying to one another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" Matt. viii. 22. Never before had he appeared to them so awful and so loving a being as in this time of terrible trial.

Soon after the storm was allayed, they arrived in the country of Gadara,* and, on their landing, two men, possessed with devils, came from the tombs to meet Jesus. One of them, who was more furious than the other, had been often bound with chains and fetters, but to no purpose, being always broken with great fury, so that no man attempted further to restrain him. Being therefore at liberty, he shunned the society of men, wandering day and night in deserted places among the sepulchres or caverns where the dead were deposited, crying and making the most dismal complaints, and cutting himself with stones.

The disciples were terrified at the approach of these furious mortals; but Jesus soon dissipated their fears, commanding, while the men were at a distance, the devils to come out of them. The heavenly mandate was no sooner given than they fell on their faces, crying out "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of

* The city of Gadara lay about seven miles southeast of the sea of Galilee, on the range of hills, whose steep precipices touched its shore. It belonged to the tribe of Gad, but many Greeks were mingled among its inhabitants in the time of Christ. The ruins of ancient tombs are still found on the hill-side, memorable for the fierce demoniacs who infested them, and whose deliverance by Jesus is here recorded.

the Most High God!" Mark v. 7. "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Matt. viii. 29. "I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not!" Mark v. 7. The apostate spirits well knew the power of the Son of God, and trembled lest he should immediately cast them into the torments prepared for them, and not suffer them to continue roving through the earth till the day of judgment, when they shall be condemned to eternal punishment in the sight of the whole creation.*

Jesus, being willing that the torments suffered by these miserable men should be known before he healed them, asked one of the devils his name, who answered, "Legion, for we are many" (Mark v. 9), begging, at the same time, that he would not command them to repair into the abyss, or bottomless pit, but suffer them to enter a herd of swine feeding at a distance.

How subtle are the wiles of the devil! The power of the Son of God he knew was not to be resisted; but he could not help envying the benevolent miracles he had wrought for the sons of men, and was therefore willing to prevent as much as possible their good effects on the miserable people of this country. This was the true reason why he begged leave to enter the herd of swine: he knew he could destroy them; and this he hoped would render our blessed Saviour odious to the wicked inhabitants of Gadara.

Though Jesus well knew his crafty design, yet he permitted the devils to enter the swine, that his disciples, and others who were with him, might be fully convinced these unhappy persons were really possessed by apostate spirits, and at the same time give them a ter-

* See the note on page 108.

rible instance of their power when free from all restraint.

The divine permission was no sooner granted, than the spectators beheld, at a distance, the torments of these poor creatures, with what amazing rapidity they ran to the confines of the lake, leaped from the precipices into the sea, and perished in the waters; while the persons who a moment before were raving and cutting themselves in the most shocking manner became at once meek and composed, having recovered entirely the exercise of their reason.

The keepers of the herd, terrified at this astonishing miracle, ran into the city, publishing in every part the cure of the men possessed with the devils, and the destruction of the swine.

This surprising report threw the inhabitants into the greatest consternation: they left the city to be spectators of so wonderful an event; but when they saw the men who had been possessed sitting at the feet of Jesus, decently clothed and in their right minds, their fear was increased. For, knowing they had trespassed in keeping the swine (which was contrary to the law of Moses), they dreaded a more severe punishment; and, being ignorant of the goodness of Jesus, though he had given them so remarkable a proof of it in the cure of these wretched mortals, they besought him that he would leave their country.

There prevailed a custom among the heathen, when any illustrious hero had delivered his country from its enemies or from any other great evil, to erect proud columns to his memory; his statue was seen in every place: altars blazed to his glory; they honored him with

the high appellation of "saviour," and thought nothing, not even divine honors, too great to confer upon him. But when Christ had removed a monster from the Gadarenes more formidable and fearful than any in heathen history, even a legion of devils, and rendered the way by which no man could pass before secure from danger, instead of being received by them as a Saviour, and as the Son of God, with the acclamations and hosannas of the people, he was besought to depart out of their coasts. Stupid people! they had indeed lost their herd of swine, but surely the valuable gift they had received, in two of their countrymen and fellow-creatures being delivered from the tyranny of Satan, was better than the cattle on a thousand hills, and merited at least their thanks and acknowledgments.

The request of the Gadarenes was, however, complied with by the blessed Jesus, who, entering the ship, returned to the country from whence he came, leaving them a valuable pledge of his love, and us a noble pattern of perseverance in well-doing, even when our kindnesses are condemned or requited with injuries.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR LORD PROCEEDS IN ACTS OF MERCY AND BENEVOLENCE—
ADDS MATTHEW TO THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES—CASTS OUT
AN EVIL SPIRIT—PASSES AGAIN THROUGH GALILEE—SE-
LECTS TWELVE FROM AMONG HIS DISCIPLES, AS HIS CON-
STANT FOLLOWERS AND COMPANIONS, AND ADDRESSES THE
MULTITUDE IN AN EXCELLENT DISCOURSE.

THE return of our Saviour and his disciples to Capernaum was no sooner published than such throngs of people were gathered together that the house could not contain them, nor even the court before it. He, however, preached the words of eternal life to the listening audience, among whom were many Pharisees and doctors of the law, who, from the fame of his miracles, were come from all quarters to hear him.

He not only addressed them in the most nervous and pathetic manner, in order to inculcate the doctrines he delivered, but also performed such astonishing miracles as ought to have removed all their scruples with regard to the truth of his mission.

Among other instances he gave of his divine power was that of restoring a man to perfect health who had long been afflicted with the palsy, and was reduced by that terrible disease to the most melancholy condition, being unable to move any member of his body, but seemed rather an emaciated carcass than a man. This miserable object was brought on his bed by four persons, who, being unable to enter by the door, on account of the multitude, carried him to the top of the house,

which, like the other roofs in that country, was flat and had a battlement round it, according to the direction given by Moses. Deut. xxii. 8.

On these roofs there was a kind of trap-door, by which they came out of the houses upon the roofs, where they spent a considerable part of the day. It was also common to have a flight of stairs from the garden to the roof, and by these the persons seem to have carried the sick of the palsy, but finding the door fastened, forced it open and uncovered the roof, and through the opening let down, by ropes, the sick of the palsy, lying on his bed, into the midst of the company, before Jesus; who, seeing the faith of the friends of this afflicted person, had compassion on him, and spake aloud, "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven thee."*

The Scribes, taking offence at this saying, cried out, This man speaketh blasphemy; for he appropriates that to himself which is solely the province of Omnipotence. "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" They were ignorant that the person who uttered such gracious words was the Son of God, and, consequently, had the power of forgiving the sins of the human race.

But our Lord, who had recourse to the most secret recesses of the heart, and was willing to show them that he was really endued with the Spirit of God, said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?" These were questions beyond the abilities of the haughty Scribes to answer, and they held

* The text reads, "Jesus seeing their faith." This expression seems properly to include the faith of the sick man, as well as that of his friends

their peace. The blessed Jesus then added that the miracle he was going to perform would sufficiently demonstrate that he had not usurped what did not in the strictest manner belong to him. And, turning himself from those bigoted teachers of Israel toward the sick of the palsy, he said unto him, "Arise; take up thy bed,* and go unto thine house." Matt. ix. 6.

Nor was this divine mandate any sooner given than the man was restored to his former health and strength, and, to the astonishment of all present, rose, took up his bed, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw this great work, expressed the highest degree of surprise, mixed with admiration for the great honor the Almighty had conferred on human nature: "They glorified God, who had given such power unto men." But with regard to the Scribes and Pharisees, though they must have been confounded at this miracle, yet they still continued in their unbelief; an instance which should awaken in us the most serious thoughts, as it abundantly demonstrates that the palsy of the soul is a much more deplorable disease than the palsy of the body.

The blessed Jesus, having wrought this miracle, re-

* The bed of this sufferer, probably, was like that of the soldier, and the poorer sort in all countries, nothing more than a blanket, or the coarse outer garment, which was equally adapted by its form and texture to be used as a mantle by day and a bed by night. Exod. xxii. 26, 27. It could, therefore, be carried with ease, and could not be justly classed among the "burdens" forbidden on the Sabbath.

Beds in the East were of three sorts. 1. The *divan*, or raised sofa, around the side of a room. 2. The mattress, or bed, somewhat resembling our own, spread upon a bedstead. Deut. iii. 11; 1 Sam. xix. 13-15. 3. The outer garment above described. Deut. xxiv. 13.

paired to the sea-side, and taught a multitude of people. What the subject of his sermon was, the evangelists have not told us; but it was doubtless, like the rest, calculated to promote the eternal welfare of mankind.

His discourse being ended, he returned to the city, and in his way saw Matthew, or Levi, the son of Alpheus, a rich publican,* sitting in his office, where the customs were levied, at the port of Capernaum, whom he ordered to follow him. Matthew immediately obeyed the summons, and followed the Saviour of the world, to pursue a far more honorable and important employment—being afterward both an apostle and evangelist.

Some little time after his call, he made a splendid entertainment for his master, inviting all the publicans he knew, hoping that by hearing the heavenly conversation of Christ they might also repent and embrace the doctrines of the gospel.

The self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, who considered all men as sinners except themselves, especially the publicans, were highly offended that one who called himself

* Publicans were the revenue officers under the Roman Government. They consisted of two classes, the principals and the subordinates. Some of the former (among whom was Zaccheus) were of highly respectable character; but the latter were, as a class, infamous for their rapacity, corruption, and cruelty.

Among the Jews of our Saviour's time the Publicans were peculiarly odious, because they collected taxes for the Roman Government, which was offensive to their pride as foreign, and to their religion as heathen. Many even pleaded Deut. xvii. 15, as justifying a refusal to pay taxes to the Emperor of Rome; a perverse doctrine, repudiated by Christ in his admirable answer to the Pharisees and Herodians. Matt. xxii. 21. The conversion of Matthew (or Levi), and the association of Jesus with the Publicans, at the feast which he provided, was therefore excessively offensive to the Pharisees. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is a striking picture of their discordant feelings.

a prophet should so far demean himself as to be seen in the company of such men, and asked his disciples, with an air of insolence, in the hearing of all the guests, how their Master could sit down at the same table with publicans and sinners.

Our Lord replied to this artful question, that the sick only had need of a physician, and desired them to reflect seriously on the prophet Hosea's declaration: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The turning sinners into the path of righteousness, which is the highest act of benevolence, is far more acceptable to the Almighty than all the ceremonies of the law of Moses so highly magnified by your fraternity, who on many occasions observe them at the expense of charity; adding, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." The chief object of my attention is the conversion of sinners.

This answer, however satisfactory to an unprejudiced person, was far from being so to the Scribes and Pharisees, who, joining with some of John's disciples then present, returned to Matthew's house, and demanded of Jesus why his disciples wholly neglected to fast—a duty often performed both by the rulers of Israel and the disciples of John. To this the blessed Jesus replied, It is not a proper season for the friends of the bridegroom to fast and afflict themselves while they enjoy his company; "but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then they shall fast." The various calamities and afflictions that shall attend them after the departure of their Master shall cause them to fast; which they shall repeat as often as the circumstances of distress and danger with which

they will be surrounded shall require ; and added, that to have obliged his disciples to observe the precepts of frequent abstinence at a time when he was employing them to preach the gospel, by which all the legal ceremonies of the law were to be abolished, would have been as absurd as to sew a new piece of cloth upon a rotten garment, which would only make the rent worse ; or to put new wine into old leathern bottles, which on the first fermentation of the liquor would burst ; indicating that infant virtue must not immediately be put to the greatest trials, lest it be destroyed by the severity of the exercise.

During this controversy between our Lord and the haughty Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew's house, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came running to him, in all the agonies of grief, and, in the presence of the whole company, fell on the ground before him, beseeching that he would come and heal his daughter, who lay at the point of death.

When did the beneficent Jesus deny his gracious assistance to those who implored it of him ? He immediately arose, and followed the ruler toward his house, surrounded by a great multitude of people, who were desirous of seeing so great a miracle.

But, as he passed through the street, a woman who had for twelve years been afflicted with an issue or flux of blood, and had spent her whole substance on physicians to no purpose, "came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment ; for she said within herself, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be well." Nor was she deceived ; for no sooner had she touched the border of the garment of the Son of God than her issue of blood

dried up; and she felt, by the return of her health and strength, and other agreeable sensations that accompany such sudden changes from painful diseases to perfect health, that the cure was absolutely complete.

But this transaction could not be concealed: the blessed Jesus knew the whole, and her secret thoughts, before she put them into practice, and, pleased with the opinion this woman had entertained both of his power and goodness, would not by any means suffer it to pass unapplauded. Accordingly, he turned himself about, and asked, "Who touched me?" He well knew the person, but asked this question for the fuller manifestation of the woman's faith, and that he might have an opportunity of instructing and comforting her.

His disciples, being ignorant of what had passed, were surprised at the question. "Thou seest," said they to their Master, "the multitude thronging and pressing thee; and sayest thou, Who touched me?" They could not distinguish between the spiritual and corporeal touch, nor knew that such efficacious virtue had gone out of their Master. Jesus, however, persisted in knowing who it was that had done the thing; and the woman, finding it in vain to conceal her action any longer, came to him trembling, and told him all. Perhaps the uncleanness of her distemper was the reason of her fear, thinking he would be offended even at her touching the hem of his garment. But the divine Physician, far from being angry, spoke to her in the kindest manner, and commended her faith, on which account he had consented to heal her plague: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole." Matt. ix. 22.

Such a miraculous incident must doubtless have greatly strengthened the ruler's faith ; for, behold, a virtue little inferior to that of raising the dead issues from the border of Christ's garment, and heals a disease which for the space of twelve years had baffled all the skill of the healing art and defied the power of medicine. Indeed, the faith of this ruler had great need of the strongest confirmation ; for news was brought him that his daughter was even now dead, and therefore it was needless for him to give any further trouble to Jesus—not in the least suspecting he had power to recall the departed spirit and to reanimate the breathless body.

This message was a terrible blow to the affectionate parent. His only daughter, who a few days before was in the bloom of youth, was now a pale and lifeless corpse, and with her all his joys and comforts were fled. But Jesus, commiserating his grief, desired him to be comforted, promising that his daughter should be restored.

On his coming to the ruler's house, he found it full of mourners, who made terrible lamentations,—a sufficient demonstration that the damsel was really dead ; and, accordingly, when our blessed Saviour desired the mourners to cease their funeral ceremonies, as the maid was not dead, but sleeping, they laughed him to scorn.

It is necessary to remark in this place that the Jews, when they spoke of a person's death, styled it sleep, so to intimate their belief that his spirit existed in the happy scenes of paradise, and their hopes of a future resurrection to life eternal. But the blessed Jesus used the word with remarkable propriety, to signify that though she was now locked in the cold embrace of death,

yet he was going to release her from the power of the king of terrors, with the same ease as a person is awaked from sleep. Thus our blessed Saviour, in the very manner of performing a miracle, modestly declined the honor that would undoubtedly result from a work so greatly superior to all the powers of men.

Having thus briefly addressed the mourners, he entered the chamber where the damsel was lying, but suffered none to follow him except Peter, James, and John, together with the father and mother of the damsel. Probably his reason for suffering these only to be spectators of so stupendous a work was that they might have an opportunity of examining the whole transaction in the most careful manner, and be thence enabled afterward to report it upon the fullest conviction and with every circumstance of credibility.

The blessed Jesus now approached the body, took her by the hand, and, with a gentle voice, said, "Maid, arise." The heavenly command was instantly obeyed: the damsel arose, as from a sleep, and with all the appearance of health and vigor: for Jesus commanded to give her something to eat—a plain proof that she did not appear in the weak and languishing condition of a person worn out with disease, or even like one who had fainted away—a circumstance that abundantly proves the greatness and perfection of the miracle. It is therefore no wonder that her parents should be astonished at so stupendous a work, the fame of which was soon spread through all the neighboring country, though Jesus, who was in every sense above praise, and therefore never courted it, had strictly charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

These instances of power did the blessed Jesus display to convince the world that those who die in him are not dead, and that he hath the keys of life and death. Those also of the present age, who believe that the soul sleeps with the body till the resurrection, will do well to consider the expression of the evangelist, "Her spirit came again," Luke viii. 55, which sufficiently shows that the soul exists separately when the body is laid in the chambers of the grave.

Our blessed Saviour, having performed this benevolent miracle, left the ruler's house, and was followed through the streets by two blind men, imploring assistance. Nor did they implore in vain: the Redeemer of mankind was, and still is, always ready to grant the petitions of those who apply to him for relief. Accordingly, he was no sooner entered into a house, to avoid the thronging multitude, than he touched their eyes, and said, "According to your faith, be it unto you," Matt. ix. 29, and immediately the invaluable gift of sight was bestowed upon them.

The blind men were so overjoyed at beholding the light, that, though our Saviour charged them to keep the miracle a secret, they published his fame in every part of the country, being unwilling to conceal what, in gratitude for so great a mercy, they thought themselves obliged to divulge.

The men who had thus miraculously received their sight being departed, the multitude brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. So moving a sight could not fail of attracting a compassionate regard from the Saviour of the world, who, being never weary of well doing, immediately cast out the apostate spirit;

on which the dumb man recovered the use of his speech, and spoke in a very rational manner to the multitude, who with one voice declared that such wondrous works were never wrought by any of the old prophets: "It was never so seen in Israel." Matt. ix. 33. These works did not remove the prejudice of the Pharisees, who, being unable to deny the miracles, insinuated that he did it by a power received from Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. A poor pretence, indeed! and it did not escape the animadversion it deserved from the Saviour of the world, as we shall see in a succeeding chapter. Well might the prophet Isaiah cry out, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But all their calumnies could not provoke the meek and merciful Jesus to cease from performing these compassionate offices for the children of men. On the contrary, he exerted himself still more and more to promote the prosperity of the whole human race. Accordingly, he left Capernaum, and travelled through the country in search of miserable objects, on which he might confer happiness and peace, visiting "all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Matt. ix. 35.

On his return from this tour to Capernaum, he was attended by a great number of people, who expressed a more than common desire to hear the doctrine of the gospel—an incident abundantly sufficient to engage the attention of this divine Teacher, who was ever careful

to cultivate the latent seeds of virtue, and cherish the least appearance of piety and religion.

It was not this desire of the people alone that excited his compassion toward them: he well knew they were wholly destitute of spiritual teachers; for the Scribes and Pharisees, who ought to have instructed them, were blind, perverse, and lazy guides, who, instead of seeking the glory of the Almighty, made it their whole business to support and augment their own. They magnified the ritual ceremonies and traditions, but took no care to inspire the people with a love of virtue: "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God," were no parts of their doctrine. The small appearance of religion they entertained was wholly hypocritical; and the disputes carried on with so much bitterness between the factions of the Pharisees and Sadducees distracted the minds of the people.

The inhabitants of Judea were truly in a deplorable state, which called loudly for the compassion of the Son of God, who always regarded the descendants of Jacob with the most tender affection. He saw the sheep of Israel scattered on the barren wastes of error and superstition, without a shepherd to lead them to the heavenly pastures of the law and the prophets. He saw, he commiserated their distress, and resolved to provide some remedy for it. Accordingly, he directed his disciples to intercede with the Almighty, who, by his servants the prophets, had sown the seeds of piety and virtue in the minds of the Jews, that he would not suffer the rich harvest to be lost for want of laborers. "The harvest," said the blessed Jesus to his disciples, "truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the

Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Matt. iv. 37, 38.

To these gracious acts he added the most powerful of all intercessions to the throne of grace—his own prevailing prayer—and, accordingly, ascended to the top of a mountain, and there spent the night in making the most powerful petitions in behalf of the lost sheep of Israel to his heavenly Father.

Having spent the night in this pious exercise, he lost no time in putting his beneficent intentions in execution; for no sooner had darkness withdrawn her sable vail, and the blushing rays of the morn adorned the chambers of the east, than the benevolent Redeemer of mankind called his disciples to him, and chose twelve, whom he named Apostles, to be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. He ordered them to be with him, that they might learn from his own mouth the doctrines they were to preach to the whole world; that they might see his glory, and the transcendent glory of the virtues which adorned his human life; that they might be witnesses of all the wondrous works he should perform during his residence in this vale of misery, and by which his mission from the courts of heaven was to be fully demonstrated.*

These twelve persons, thus qualified, were to supply the people with that spiritual food they so greatly wanted, both while their Master continued here below, and after his ascension to the right hand of power. And, that nothing might be wanted to render their preaching acceptable to the people, and confirm the important doctrines they delivered, he invested them with

*.See note page 474.

full power to cure all diseases, cast out devils, and even to raise the dead.

All these persons being illiterate Galileans, and, at first, destitute of the qualifications necessary to the discharge of their duty, integrity alone excepted, were the most unlikely persons in the world to confound the wisdom of the wise, baffle the power of the mighty, overturn the many false religions which then flourished everywhere, under the protection of the civil government, and in short, to reform the manners of mankind, then universally corrupted.

Yet the religion which these illiterate Galileans taught through the world, exhibited a far juster notion of things than the Grecian and Roman philosophers were able to attain, though their lives were spent in study and contemplation. Hence, by its own intrinsic splendor, as well as by the glory of its miracles, and the energy of the Holy Spirit, this religion appeared to be wholly original and divine.

It was, therefore, with the highest wisdom that the foundations of the Church were laid in the labors of a few illiterate fishermen; for it irresistibly demonstrated that the immense fabric was at first raised, and is still sustained, by the hand of the Almighty.

After appointing the twelve apostles, he came down from the mountain, and was joyfully received by the multitudes of people who were waiting for him in the plain and pressed to touch him, well knowing that if they could only touch the hem of his garment they should be healed of whatever distemper they were afflicted with—a sufficient reason why they were con-

tinually waiting for him and were willing to accompany him even to the remotest corners of the wilderness.

The preaching and miracles of our Lord were attended to, not by the low and vulgar only, but persons of the first rank and character came from distant parts of the country to converse with him, hear his doctrine, and be spectators of his wonderful works. It therefore evidently appears that persons of all ranks were desirous of following him; and their desire could be founded on nothing but the truth of his doctrines and miracles.

After healing all the sick among the multitude, he turned toward his disciples, and delivered a divine discourse, something like that he had before preached to them on the mountain; but in the former he only pronounced blessings, whereas in the latter he added curses also; and in this principally it differs from that recorded by St. Matthew. We shall therefore only select a few passages from the sermon now delivered, as we have given a larger paraphrase on the other.

“Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.” Luke vii. 24. Riches, considered in themselves, by no means render us the objects of the Almighty’s hatred, unless accompanied by those vices which too often flow from an opulent fortune, as luxury, covetousness, and the like. The woe, therefore, is here denounced against those only who are contaminated with these vices; for those who make a proper use of their wealth, and possess the virtues which should accompany affluence, have no share in the malediction.

“Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.” The pain ye shall suffer in a future life shall be sharp

and excruciating. The opportunities you have neglected of doing good to your afflicted brethren in this life shall then be remembered with the most poignant grief and bewailed with the most bitter lamentations.

“Woe unto you that laugh now ! for ye shall mourn and weep.” This malediction of our blessed Saviour is not inconsistent with the apostle’s precept, which commands Christians always to rejoice. Neither is the mirth against which the woe is here denounced to be understood of that constant cheerfulness of temper which arises in the breasts of true Christians from the comfortable and cheerful doctrine with which they are enlightened by the gospel, the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, and the hope they have of everlasting life, and the pleasure they enjoy in the practice of the duties of religion ; but it relates to that turbulent carnal mirth, that excessive levity and vanity of spirit, which arises not from any solid foundation, but from sensual pleasures, or those vain amusements of life in which the giddy and gay contrive to spend their time—that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflections. Persons who constantly indulge themselves in this kind of mirth shall weep and mourn eternally, when they are excluded from the joys of heaven and banished forever from the presence of God, by the light of whose countenance all the righteous are enlivened and made transcendently happy.

“Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you ! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” Woe unto you if, by propagating such doctrines as encourage men in sin, you shall gain to yourselves the applause

and flattery of the generality of men ! for thus in old times did the false prophets and deceivers, who, accommodating their doctrines to the lusts and passions of men, gained their applause, but incurred the wrath and displeasure of a just and all-seeing God.

CHAPTER X.

CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S GLORIOUS DOCTRINES— BENEFICENT ACTS AND ASTONISHING MIRACLES WROUGHT IN CONFIRMATION OF THE DIVINITY OF HIS MISSION, AND THE EXTENDING OF HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM.

THE divine Preacher having closed this excellent sermon, repaired to Capernaum, and was met by certain messengers from a centurion, desiring him to come and heal a servant who was dear to him and ready to die.

This centurion, from the account given of him by the evangelist, seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion, as he was a lover of the sons of Jacob and had erected for them a place of worship ; and accordingly the inhabitants of Capernaum strongly espoused his cause on this occasion, saying, “ that he was worthy for whom he should do this. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.” Luke vii. 4, 5.

There was not the least danger that this petition

would be rejected by the blessed Jesus, who sought all occasions of doing good to the children of men. Accordingly, he very readily accompanied the messengers; but before he came to the house he was met by some of the centurion's friends, who expressed the high idea that officer entertained of his power, and desired that he would not take the trouble of coming to his house, as a word was abundantly sufficient to perform the cure. At this message Jesus turned himself about, and said to the multitude, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Luke vii. 9.

The persons, having delivered their message, returned to the house, and found the servant, who had been sick, perfectly recovered.

Having thus miraculously healed the centurion's servant, he repaired to Peter's house to eat bread; but the multitude came again together, and surrounded the house in a tumultuous manner, demanding, in all probability, that he would heal their sick; and it was not without difficulty they were dispersed by his friends.

The multitude being dispersed, Jesus called unto him the twelve apostles he had before chosen, and delivered them such instructions as he thought necessary to enable them to discharge the duties of this important commission.

"Go," said their heavenly Master, "and preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Publish in every corner of Judea the glad tidings of the gospel, and the near approach of the Messiah's kingdom—not a temporal, but a spiritual empire, consisting of righteousness and peace.

To inure them to those hardships and dangers which were to attend them in their preaching after the death of their Master, our Lord forbade them to provide any thing for their journey—teaching them to rely wholly on the providence of God for support in every distress, and to have recourse to his protection in every danger.

Our Lord's disciples had perhaps flattered themselves with the pleasing expectation that the glad tidings they were going to publish, and the miraculous cures they were enabled to perform, would procure them an honorable reception wherever they came. Their Master, however, told them the event would not in any manner answer their expectations, but that they were everywhere to be despised, persecuted, delivered into the hands of the rulers, and punished as wicked men. But at the same time he promised them the aid of the Almighty, and gave them instructions how to behave in every particular. He added that those who rejected their message should be treated with severity by the Great Judge of all the earth; but those who received them kindly, and gave even a cup of cold water to the least of his disciples for their Master's sake, should not fail of receiving a large reward.

Having received this commission and being sent out two by two, for mutual counsel and help, the apostles visited all parts of Palestine, where the Jews inhabited, preaching the doctrine of repentance, working miracles for its confirmation, and particularly healing the sick, while our blessed Lord continued the course of his ministry in Galilee.

The apostles being returned from their tour, Jesus went to Nain, a town situated near Endor, about two

miles south of Mount Tabor, attended by many of his disciples and a great multitude of his people.

On their coming to the entrance of the city, a melancholy scene presented itself to the eyes of Jesus and his followers: "Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Luke vii. 12. Who would not have imagined that God had indeed "forgotten to be gracious, and, in his anger, shut up his tender mercies" from this poor widow, suffering under the heaviest load, and laboring under the most oppressive burden of distress? Deprived of her son, her only son, in the flower of his youth, when he might have repaid his mother's toils and been to her in the place of a husband—of that husband she had long since lost, and whose loss was supportable only through the comfort of this child, the surviving image of his departed father, the balm of her grief, the hope of her afflicted soul—who now shall administer consolation to this solitary widow, to this lonely parent, bereaved of her husband, deprived of her child? What misery can be more complicated? What can be more natural than that she should "refuse to be comforted," that she should "go down to the grave with mourning," and visit the chambers of death, the residence of the beloved remains of her husband and her son, with inconsolable sorrow?

Toward this receptacle of mortality, that dreary waste of forgetfulness, the mournful funeral was now, with slow and solemn pomp, advancing, when the compassionate Redeemer of mankind met the melancholy procession, composed of a long train of her weeping neighbors and relations, who pitied her distress, sympathized with her in this great affliction, and were melted with

compassion at her deplorable circumstances. But sighs and tears were all they had to offer : relief could not be expected from a human being : their commiseration, though grateful to her oppressed soul, could neither restore the husband nor the son : submission and patience were the only lessons they could preach or this afflicted daughter of Israel learn.

But, though man was unable to relieve the distresses of this disconsolate widow, the Saviour of the world, who beheld the melancholy procession, was both able and willing to do it. There was no need of a powerful solicitor to implore assistance from the Sod of God : his own compassion was abundantly sufficient. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her : he both sought the patient and offered the cure unexpectedly. "Weep not," said the blessed Jesus to this afflicted woman. Alas ! it had been wholly in vain to bid her refrain from tears, who had lost her only child, the sole comfort of her age, without ministering the balm of comfort to heal her broken spirit. This our Redeemer well knew : and therefore, immediately advancing toward the corpse, "he touched the bier." The pomp of the funeral was instantly stopped ; silence closed every mouth, and expectation filled the breast of every spectator. But this deep suspense did not long continue : that glorious voice, which shall one day call our dead bodies from the grave, filled their ears with these remarkable words : "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Nor was this powerful command uttered without its effect. "He spake, and it was done:" he called with authority, and immediately "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he restored him to his mother." He did not show him

around to the multitude, but, by a singular act of modesty and humanity, delivered him to his late afflicted, now astonished and rejoicing, mother, to intimate that in compassion to her great distress he had wrought this stupendous miracle.

A holy and awful fear fell on all who heard and saw this astonishing event; “and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet is risen up amongst us, and that God hath visited his people.”

Here it must be observed that, as this miracle is liable to no objection, it therefore abundantly proves that the power of the blessed Jesus was truly and absolutely divine. He met this funeral procession by accident. It was composed of the greatest part of the inhabitants of the city, who bewailed the disconsolate state of the afflicted widow, and therefore well knew that the youth was really dead. The powerful word which called the breathless body to life was delivered in an audible voice, before all the company, and even at the very gate of the city, the place of public resort.

This miracle, with others amply attested, abundantly evinces the truth of our Saviour’s mission, and that he was indeed the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHARACTER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST CLEARED AND JUSTIFIED BY THE BLESSED JESUS—HE VISITS SIMON, THE PHARISEE—DISPLAY OF OUR LORD'S HUMILITY AND CONDESCENSION.

WE have taken notice, in a foregoing chapter, that Herod, incensed at the honest freedom of the Baptist in reproving his adulterous commerce with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, had cast him into prison; and in this confinement he still continued, though his disciples were suffered to visit and converse with him. In one of these visits they had given him an account of our Saviour's having elected twelve apostles to preach the gospel, and of his miracles, particularly of his raising to life the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain. On hearing these wonderful relations, the Baptist despatched two of his disciples to Jesus, to ask him this important question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Accordingly, the disciples of John came to Jesus, and proposed the question of their master, at the very time when he "cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and to many that were blind he gave sight." Jesus, therefore, instead of directly answering their question, bade them return and inform their master what they had seen: "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight; and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up,

and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Matt. xi. 4, 5. Go tell your master that the very miracles the prophet Isaiah so long since foretold should be wrought by the Messiah you have yourselves seen performed.

It appears from the Scriptures that the Baptist, through the whole course of his ministry, had borne constant and ample testimony to our Saviour's divine mission, that he exhorted those who came to him to rest their faith not on himself, but on "him that should come after him," and that as soon as he was acquainted who Jesus was, by a visible descent of the Holy Ghost and a voice from heaven, he made it his business to dispose the Jews in general, and his own disciples in particular, to receive and reverence him, by testifying everywhere that he was the "Son of God, the Lamb of God, who came down from heaven and spake the words of God, and to whom God had given the Spirit not by measure."

The Baptist, therefore, well knew who Jesus was, and consequently did not send his disciples to ask this question, to solve any doubt in his mind. But it was doubtless in part to satisfy his own disciples, that Jesus was the Messiah so long expected by the Jews, and to engage them to follow a more perfect Master, especially as he was on the point of leaving the world. But, besides this, the question had actually some reference to himself, and may intimate his wonder, that while Jesus was sending out twelve apostles to preach, with the power of working miracles, no miracle was wrought in his behalf to release him from prison, that he might return to the work of preaching. In this view the

answer of Jesus, at the close, has a personal as well as general application: "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me:" as if he had said, When you have informed your master of what you have seen and heard, tell him that he would do well not to be offended, either at the choice of the apostles, or that no miracle has been wrought for his release.

Lest the people, from this conversation, should infer any thing unfavorable to the character of the Baptist, he took occasion to praise his invincible courage and constancy. John was no "reed shaken by the wind," no fawning parasite in "the palaces of kings;" "but a prophet; nay, more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way before thee:'" nevertheless, he added, "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he:" that is, the least apostle or preacher of the Gospel constantly attending on Jesus, is much better acquainted with his character, disposition, and doctrine, than the Baptist who had only transiently seen him.

Having thus shown the greatness of the Baptist, and wherein he was surpassed by the disciples, our blessed Saviour took occasion from thence to blame the perverseness of the age in rejecting both the Baptist's testimony and his own.

It seems that the Scribes and Pharisees, seeing their pretended mortifications eclipsed by the real austerity of the Baptist, affirmed that his living in the deserts, his shunning the company of men, the coarseness of his clothing, the abstemiousness of his diet, and the other severities he practised, were the effects of his being pos-

sessed by an evil spirit or of a religious melancholy. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil." Matt. xi. 18.

On the other hand, they would not listen to the heavenly doctrines preached by Christ, because he did not separate himself from society—attributing his free manner of living to a certain looseness of disposition, though they well knew that he observed the strictest temperance himself, and never encouraged the vices of others, either by dissimulation or example: "The Son of man came eating and drinking; and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But Wisdom is justified of her children." Matt. xi. 19.

He next proceeded to upbraid the several cities where his most wonderful works had been performed. For though they had heard him preach many awakening sermons, and seen him perform such astonishing miracles as would have converted Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, cities infamous for their impiety, contempt of religion, pride, luxury, and debauchery, yet so great was their obstinacy, that they persisted in their wickedness, notwithstanding all he had done to convert them from the evil of their ways. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have re-

mained unto this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Matt. xi. 21, etc.

Having denounced these judgments on the cities which had neglected to profit by his mighty works, he concluded his discourse with these heavenly words: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt. xi. 28, etc.

Having concluded this public address, one of the Pharisees (named Simon) desired he would "eat with him." The blessed Jesus accepted the invitation, accompanied him to his house, and sat down to meat.

He had not been long at the table before a woman who had lately left the paths of vice for those of virtue placed herself behind him, and, from a deep conviction of her former crimes, and the obligations she owed the Saviour of mankind for bringing her to a sense of them, shed such torrents of tears that they flowed down on his feet. But, observing that her tears had wet the feet of her beloved Instructor, she wiped them with the hairs of her head, kissed them with the most ardent affection, and anointed them with precious ointment she had brought for the purpose.

It was a custom among the inhabitants of the East to pour fragrant oils on the heads of such guests as they intended particularly to honor, while they sat at meat; and probably the woman's original intention was to anoint Jesus in the usual manner. But, being exceedingly humble on account of her former crimes, she could

not presume to take that freedom with him, and therefore poured it on his feet, to express at once the greatness of her love and the profoundness of her humility. The Pharisee, who had attentively observed the woman, concluded from thence that our Saviour could not be a prophet. "This man," said the Pharisee to himself, "if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." Luke vii. 39.

But, though Simon spoke this only in his heart, his thoughts were not concealed from the Great Redeemer of mankind, who, to convince him that he was a prophet, and that he knew not only the character of men, but even the secret thoughts of their hearts, immediately conversed with him on the very subject he had been revolving in his mind. He did not, indeed, expose him before the company by relating what he had said in secret, but, with remarkable delicacy pointed out to Simon alone the unreasonableness of his thoughts. "Simon," said the blessed Jesus, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." And then immediately he applied this parable to the subject of the woman, on which the Pharisee had so unjustly reasoned with himself. "Simon," continued our Saviour, "seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed

my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." Luke vii. 40-46.

This woman's kind services were in no danger of losing their reward from the blessed Jesus, who possessed the softer and finer feelings of human nature in their utmost perfection. Accordingly, he added, in pursuance of so kind an invitation he had before made to weary and heavy-laden sinners, "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much:* but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke vii. 47.

The blessed Jesus, having thus commended the conduct of the woman to the company, and rebuked with great delicacy the unjust suspicions of Simon, turned himself to the woman, and, in the kindest manner, assured her that "her sins were forgiven." But the power he assumed in forgiving sins greatly offended the Jews, who, not being acquainted with his divinity, considered his speech as derogatory to the honor of the Almighty. Jesus, however, contemned their malicious murmurs, and repeated his assurance, telling the woman that her faith had saved her, and bade her depart in peace.

The next day Jesus travelled from Capernaum to different parts of Galilee, going "throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of

* The conjunction "for," in this place, denotes (as the whole context shows) not the moral ground of forgiveness, but the logical evidence arising from its effect.

the kingdom of God." Luke viii. 1. That is, he declared to the people the welcome tidings of the Almighty's being willing to be reconciled to the children of men on condition of their repentance and embracing the gospel of the grace of God. Leaving Galilee, he repaired to Jerusalem to keep the passover, being the second feast of that kind since his public ministry.* In

* In a popular work of this kind, it has not been thought proper to say much in the notes on difficulties which different Harmonists have found in arranging the artless narratives of the Evangelists into chronological order. We do not think our author always successful in this matter.

The following outline of the chronology of our Lord's Ministry is important to be kept in view, adopting, for convenience, the dates of Archbishop Usher.

Christ is baptized A. D. 29, in October. Six months after, he attends his first Passover at Jerusalem, April, A. D. 30. John ii. Most of that year (from the summer to winter) he spends in Judea, teaching and baptizing disciples. About January, A. D. 31, after John is imprisoned, he returns through Samaria into Galilee. John iii. iv. Three months later, he attends his second Passover at Jerusalem. John v. On his return to Galilee, he chooses the Twelve, and labors there for over a year and a half, or to the Feast of Tabernacles, October, A. D. 32, when he leaves Galilee finally, and goes up privately to Jerusalem. John vii. The next four months is spent chiefly in Perea, east of the Jordan, in Herod's jurisdiction, visiting Jerusalem only at the feasts. John viii.-x. In February, A. D. 33, he is recalled from Perea to Bethany, and raises Lazarus, retiring for a short time to the city of Ephraim (John xi.), whence, by the way of Jericho, he goes up to Jerusalem to attend his fourth and last Passover, in April, A. D. 33. Thus his whole Ministry, from his baptism to his death, was extended through three years and a half, divided as above. Whether he attended the Passover of A. D. 32 is unknown; but is rendered probable, by his care punctually to fulfil the whole law, notwithstanding the deadly hostility of the Jewish rulers.

The real problem of the Harmony is to fix the different acts, miracles, discourses, and parables of Jesus in their proper order, within these leading divisions of time and place. The more accurately this is done, the more impressive do they appear, as each derives new light from its connection with the rest.

this journey he was accompanied by certain pious women, "who ministered to him of their substance."

CHAPTER XII.

MIRACULOUS CURE EFFECTED AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA—
REPROOF OF THE SUPERSTITION OF THE JEWS IN CONDEMN-
ING THE PERFORMANCE OF NECESSARY WORKS ON THE
SABBATH DAY—AFTER DOING MANY ACTS OF MERCY AND
WONDER, OUR BLESSED LORD IS VISITED BY HIS MOTHER
AND HIS BRETHREN, AND MAKES A SPIRITUAL REFLECTION
ON THAT INCIDENT.

OUR Lord had no sooner entered the ancient city of Jerusalem, so long famous for being the dwelling-place of the Most High, than he repaired to the public bath or pool, called in the Hebrew tongue "Bethesda," that is, "the house of mercy," on account of cures wrought there by the salutary effects of the water at certain seasons. This bath was surrounded by five porches or cloisters, in which those who frequented the place were sheltered both from the heat and cold, and were particu-

If the above views are correct, it will follow that our author has crowded into the first three months of our Lord's ministry in Galilee, after John's imprisonment, a mass of events which might more than fill a year. Although, therefore, the Passover he describes in the next chapter is really the second, it belongs to a much earlier period in the history; as far back as chapter vi. or vii.

larly serviceable to the diseased and infirm who crowded thither to find relief in their afflictions.

These porches were now filled with a "great multitude of impotent folk—of blind, halt, withered—waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."* John v. 3, 4.

Among these objects of pity was one who had labored under his infirmity no less than thirty-and-eight years. The length and greatness of this man's afflictions, which were well known to the Son of God, were sufficient to excite his tender compassion and make him happy to demonstrate that his power of healing was infinitely superior to the sanative virtue of the waters: while the rest were suffered to remain in their afflictions.

Had not our Lord at this time restored any of them to health, he would not have acted contrary to the general account which the evangelists give of his goodness on other occasions—namely, "that he healed all who came to him." For such diseased persons who left their habitations through a persuasion of his power and kindness

* Dr. Robinson thinks the pool of Bethesda is the same as that now called the "Fountain of the Virgin," in the lower part of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, just southeast of Jerusalem. This pool is of great antiquity, fifteen feet long, and five or six wide, and is reached by descending two flights of steps. Its waters rise and fall at irregular intervals, but possess no curative power. Hence, it would seem, that if such power existed in the days of Christ, it was of supernatural origin, and of a transient character, as described in the text. How marked is the superiority of that spiritual fountain opened by the Saviour, which heals the soul of sin and uncleanness, and which never ceases to flow. Zech. xiii. 1.

were proper objects of mercy ; whereas the sick in the cloisters of Bethesda were no more so than the other sick throughout the whole country, whom he could have cured with a single word of his mouth, had he been pleased to have uttered it.

Our compassionate Lord now approached the man whom he had singled out as the person on whom to manifest his power : he asked him whether he was desirous of being made whole—a question which must have induced the man to declare publicly his melancholy case in the hearing of the multitude, and consequently rendered the miracle more conspicuous. And, as this was done on the Sabbath day, our blessed Saviour seems to have wrought it to rouse the sons of Jacob from their lethargy, and convince the inhabitants of Jerusalem that the long-expected Messiah was now come and had actually visited his people.

The distressed mortal, beholding Jesus with a sorrowful countenance, and understanding that he meant his being healed by the sanative virtue of the waters, answered, “ Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool ; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.” John v. 7. But the compassionate Redeemer of mankind soon convinced him that he was not to owe his cure to the salutary nature of the waters, but to the unbounded power of the Son of God, and accordingly said to him, “ Rise : take up thy bed and walk.” No sooner was the heavenly mandate uttered than the impotent man, to the astonishment of the multitude, “ was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.” John v. 9.

This great and miraculous cure could not fail of having

a great effect on the spectators ; and his carrying his bed on the Sabbath day—which the Jews considered as a profanation of that day of rest *—tended greatly to spread the fame of the miracle over the whole city. Nor did the man scruple to obey the commands of his kind Physician : he well knew that the person who had the power of working such miracles must be a great prophet, and consequently, that his injunction could not be sinful. He therefore thought that he gave a sufficient answer to those Jews who told him it was not lawful to carry his bed on the Sabbath day, to say, “ He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.” John v. 11. He that restored my strength in an instant, and removed with a single word a disease that had many years afflicted me, commanded me at the same time to take up my bed and walk ; and surely a person endued with such power from on high would not have ordered me to do any thing but what is truly right.

The votaries of infidelity should remember that this signal miracle was performed in an instant, and even when the patient did not expect any such favor, nor even know the person to whom he owed it. No one, therefore, can pretend that imagination had any share in performing it. In short, the narrative of this miracle of mercy sufficiently proves that the person who did it was really divine.

The Jews had long expected the Messiah ; but they had expected him to appear as a temporal prince, who would not only restore the former lustre of the throne

* See the note on page 121.

of David, but infinitely augment it, and even place it over all the kingdoms of the earth. And hence they were unwilling to acknowledge Jesus for their Messiah, notwithstanding the proofs of his mission were undeniable, because they must, in so doing, have abandoned all their grand ideas of a temporal kingdom. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, desired them to consult their own Scriptures, particularly the writings of the prophets, where they would find the character of the Messiah displayed and be fully convinced they were all fulfilled in his person.

He also gave them to understand that the proofs of his mission were as full and clear as possible, being supported by the actions of his life, which in all things agreed with his doctrines ; for he never sought the applause of men, or assumed secular power, but was always innocent and humble, though he well knew that these virtues made him appear little in the eyes of those who had no idea of a spiritual kingdom, but expected that the Messiah would appear in all the pomp of secular authority.

In short, the fatal infidelity of the Jewish doctors was principally owing to their pride. They had long filled the minds of the people with grand ideas of the glory and power of the Messiah's kingdom ; they had represented him as a potent prince, who was to appear at once adorned with all the ensigns of power ; and therefore to have ascribed that august character to a mere Teacher of righteousness, destitute even of the ordinary advantages of birth, fortune, and erudition, would have been so plain a confession of their ignorance of the Scriptures

as must have exposed them to the ridicule and contempt of the whole people.*

Our blessed Saviour added that he himself should not only be their accuser to the God of Jacob for their infidelity, but Moses, their great legislator, in whom they

* The earliest promises of the Messiah did not speak of him distinctly as a King. As "the Seed of the Woman," he was to be the victorious Antagonist of the Tempter; as "the Seed of Abraham," he was to be the Benefactor of the world; as the "Shiloh," he was to make peace between God and man; as the great "Prophet" like unto Moses, he was to speak the words of God with supreme and final authority. But when David filled the throne of Israel, the Messiah, as his son, was for the first time expressly announced in his kingly character and glory. Thus in Psalm ii., "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Sion." Psalm xlv. is a magnificent description of Messiah as the King and Bridegroom of the Church. In Psalm lxxii. the blessings of his reign are described as universal, and as including the sum of human desire and expectation. In Psalm cx., he appears as David's "Lord" at the right hand of the Father; exercising his threefold office of King, Prophet, and Priest, by an irrevocable decree, in the midst of enemies who are to become his footstool. In Isaiah ix., he is adored as the Son of God, clothed in the most glorious titles, and establishing his throne in righteousness and peace, and ever-increasing joy. In Daniel vii., he is seen as the "Son of man" approaching the Ancient of days, and receiving a kingdom which shall hold dominion over all nations, languages, and tongues.

On these and the like prophecies of the Messiah's glory, the Jewish people fastened their eyes with a gaze so intense and exclusive, that they quite overlooked the other class of prophecies, which foretold his previous rejection, sufferings, and death; as Psalm viii., xvi., xxii., lxix., and above all Isaiah liii., and Daniel ix. 26. Even the more spiritual among them, while looking for spiritual blessings from the Messiah, failed to perceive that "Christ must first suffer these things, and then enter into his glory;" while the worldly men of the nation desired nothing but "the glory of his kingdom," as interpreted by worldly minds. To them the great mystery of the Incarnation was nothing; the infallible Prophet, the Pattern of holiness, the spotless Lamb of God, the all-atoning, interceding Priest, was nothing; because they knew not their spiritual needs; because 'the vail was upon their hearts.' The "brightness of the Father's glory" was to them "without form or comeliness"

trusted, would join in that unwelcome office ; for by denying him to be the Messiah they denied the writings of that prophet. “ For had ye,” added he, “ believed Moses, ye would have believed me ; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words ? ” John v. 46, 47.

Thus did the blessed Jesus assert himself to be the Son of God, the great Judge of the whole earth, and the Messiah promised by the prophets, and at the same time gave them such convincing proofs of his being sent from God that nothing could be said against them.

Convincing as these proofs were, yet they did not in the least abate the malice of the Scribes and Pharisees ; for the very next Sabbath, upon his disciples plucking a few ears of corn as they passed through the fields, and eating the grain after rubbing it out in their hands, they again exclaimed against this violation of the Sabbath. But our blessed Saviour soon convinced them of their error, by showing, both from the example of David and the constant practice of their own priests, who never omitted the necessary works of the temple on the Sabbath day, that works of necessity were often permitted, even though they broke a ritual command ; that acts of mercy were the most acceptable services to God of any whatever ; that it was inverting the order of things to suppose that “ man was made for the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for the benefit of man ; ” adding that, if the service of the temple should be said to claim a particular dispensation from the law of the Sabbath, he and his disciples, whose business of promoting the salvation of mankind was of equal importance, might justly claim the same exemption, as they were carrying on a much

nobler work than they who attended on the service of the temple. Thus did our blessed Saviour prove that works of mercy should not be left undone, though attended with the violation of some of the most sacred institutions of the ceremonial law.*

* It has long been disputed among divines whether the law of the Sabbath be a ceremonial or a moral law. Perhaps the true solution of the difficulty lies in the fact that it was both.

As instituted, like Marriage, at the beginning of creation, as a weekly season of rest and devotion, and divine blessing for man (Gen. ii. 1-3); as founded in the relations of men to God and to each other, as religious and social beings (Mark ii. 27); as incorporated in the Decalogue with the other moral commandments (Exodus xx. 11), it certainly seems to partake of a moral character, and hence is of universal and perpetual obligation. On the other hand, as incorporated with the civil and ceremonial code prescribed for the Jewish people, it partook of a civil and ceremonial character, both as to the day to be observed and the modes of its observance. Thus the picking up of sticks, lighting a fire, gathering food, bearing burdens, and the like (when not matters of real necessity), were ceremonial peculiarities of the Jewish code, like many other regulations attached to the original law of Marriage.

To these strictly Jewish regulations, were added many superstitious customs and false constructions of the Scribes and Pharisees in the time of Christ; under which they sought to accuse him and his disciples of breaking the Sabbath. It was to these chiefly our Lord referred when, as Lord of the Sabbath, he expounded its true moral force and authority.

All merely Jewish peculiarities, whether of law or construction, were, of course, limited to that people, and perished with their national constitution. On believers in Christ of other nations, they were never in force; and our Saviour's general rule governs all cases: "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day."

Every Christian, who receives Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath, will own his entire authority to expound the moral law of the Sabbath; to determine the day, the grounds, and the modes of its observance, independent of all connections with Jewish law, civil or ceremonial. Under him it reverts to its purely moral character, as fixed at the Creation, and enjoined in the Decalogue (Matt. v. 19); the day of the week only being changed, to conform to the new grounds of Christian worship, in honor of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord. If the seventh day of creation

Soon after this dispute with the Scribes and Pharisees, our blessed Saviour entered one of the synagogues of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, and found there a man whose right hand was withered.

The Pharisees, who observed the compassionate Jesus advance toward the man, did not doubt but he would heal him, and therefore watched him attentively, that they might have something to accuse him with the people. Their malice had arrived at that monstrous pitch that they determined to injure his reputation, by representing him as a Sabbath-breaker, if he dared to heal the man, while they themselves were profaning it by an action which would have polluted any day; namely, of seeking an opportunity of destroying a person who had never injured them, but done many good actions for the sons of Jacob, and was continually laboring for their eternal welfare.

The Saviour of the world was not unapprized of these malicious intentions. He knew their designs, and defied their impotent power by informing them of the benevolent action he designed—though he well knew they would exert every art they were masters of in order to put him to death.

Therefore, when our Saviour ordered the man to show himself to the whole congregation, in order to excite their pity, these hypocritical teachers declared, in the strongest terms, the unlawfulness of his performing even

was holy, and blessed for man, as man, though it fell on the first day after man was made; if the seventh day of Israel's observance (as determined for that nation by the special miracle of the manna) was to the devout Jew of every age a glory and delight; how much more will "the first day of the week," on which our Life arose, be dear and sacred to every Christian heart. Matt. xxviii. 1-8; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; Rev i. 10.

such beneficent actions on the Sabbath: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"* They did not, however, ask this question with an intention to hinder him from performing the miracle. No: they had a very different intention than that of accusing him. For they hoped he would have declared openly that such actions were lawful, or, at least, make no reply to their demands, which they would have construed into an acknowledgment of what they asserted.

Nor did our Lord fail to expose their malice and superstition; and accordingly asked them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" Luke vi. 9. Is it not more lawful for me on the Sabbath day to save men's lives than for you to seek my death without the least provocation? This severe rebuke would admit of no answer; and therefore they held their peace, pretending not to understand his meaning. He therefore made use of an argument which stupidity itself could not fail of understanding, and which all the art of these hypocritical sophists was unable to answer. "What man," said the blessed Jesus, "shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day." Matt. xii. 11, 12.

The former question they pretended not to understand, and therefore held their peace; but this argument effectually exposed them, though they were determined not to be convinced. This unconquerable obstinacy

* See the foregoing note.

grieved the spirit of the meek, the benevolent Jesus, who beheld them with anger,* that, if possible, an impression might be made either on them or the spectators.

But, at the same time that he testified his displeasure toward the Pharisees, he uttered words of comfort to the lame man, bidding him stretch forth his hand; and he no sooner obeyed the divine command than it was restored whole as the other.

This astonishing work, performed in the midst of a congregation many of whom doubtless knew the man while he labored under this infirmity, and in the presence of his most inveterate enemies, must certainly have had a great effect on the minds of the people, especially as they saw it had effectually silenced the Pharisees, who had nothing to offer, either against the miracle itself or the reasoning and power of him who had performed it.

But though these whited sepulchres, as our blessed Saviour justly termed them, were silenced by his arguments and astonished at his miracles, yet they were so far from abandoning their malicious intentions that they joined their inveterate enemies the Herodians and the Sadducees, in order to consult how they might destroy him—well knowing that if he continued his preaching

* Anger, in its pure state, is nothing more than that quick displeasure which springs up in a just mind at the sight of wrong doing. Hence, it may exist without sin, as in the heart of the holy Jesus. Hence, also, the injunction to Christians, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Eph. iv. 26. Yet so seldom is it found in a just and pure state in imperfect man, that it is often classed among the sinful passions which Christians must put away, lest they grieve the Holy Spirit. Eph. iv. 31. Hence, too, our Saviour's solemn warnings against the indulgence of anger without adequate cause. Matt. v. 22.

and working of miracles the people would wholly follow him, and their own power soon become contemptible. Jesus, however, thought proper to prevent their malicious designs by retiring into Galilee and there pursuing his benevolent purposes.

This retreat could not, however, conceal him from the multitude, who flocked to him from all quarters, bringing with them the sick and maimed, who were healed and sent away in peace.

Soon after this, as Jesus was disputing with the Pharisees, he was informed that his mother and brethren, or kinsmen, were without, desiring to speak to him; upon which the blessed Jesus stretched out his hands toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matt. xii. 49, 50. This glorious truth should be stamped on the minds of all believers, as it shows that every one, of what nation or kindred soever, who is brought into subjection to the will of God, is allied to the blessed Jesus and entitled to the salvation of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR LORD DELIVERS MANY REMARKABLE PARABLES, AND EXPLAINS SEVERAL OF THEM—HE RETURNS TO NAZARETH, AND COMMISSIONS THE TWELVE APOSTLES, WHOM HE HAD BEFORE SELECTED AS HIS CONSTANT ATTENDANTS AND FOLLOWERS, TO DISPERSE AND PREACH THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN DIVERS PLACES—CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE miraculous power of our blessed Lord, both in performing the most astonishing acts and confuting the most learned of the Pharisaical tribe, who endeavored to oppose his mission and doctrine, brought together so great a multitude that he repaired to the sea-side, and, for the better instruction of the people, entered into a ship, and the whole multitude stood on shore. Being thus conveniently seated, he delivered many precepts of the utmost importance, beginning with the parable of the Sower who cast his seed on different kinds of soil, the products of which were answerable to the nature of the ground—some yielding a large increase, others nothing at all. By this striking similitude the blessed Jesus represented the different kinds of hearers, and the different manner in which they were affected by the truths of religion. Some wholly suppressed the doctrines delivered; in others they produced the fruit of righteousness in a different proportion.* And surely a more

* As there are three varieties of unfruitful hearers, so there are three varieties of fruitful hearers specified by our Lord. All the former,

proper parable could not have been delivered, when such multitudes came to hear his discourses, and so few practised the precepts or profited by the heavenly doctrines they contained.

The parable being finished, his disciples asked why he taught the people in parables; to which he answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.* Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Matt. xiii. 11, etc. As if he had said, You, my beloved disciples, who are of an humble, docile temper, and are willing to use means and resort to me for instruction and the explanation of the truths I deliver, to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are delivered in parables. Besides, my discourses are plain and

whether skeptical, superficial, or secular in mind, lack the one thing—an honest and good heart; and, hence, do not understand the word of Christ either in its moral glory or its practical personal application. In a word, they lack that faith which overcomes the world, and therefore the world overcomes them. Whereas all the latter class of fruitful hearers, are fruitful just in proportion as they understand the word, and receive it into honest and good hearts; that is, just in proportion to the power of their faith. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." Matt. xvi. 17.

* That is to say, from those who lack an honest and good heart, where faith can take root, shall the means of information and the influences of the Holy Spirit, and the opportunities of salvation be taken away. John xii. 34, 35. All hearers of the word have these means for the time, but not forever. Their removal is a terrible calamity. Prov. i. 24-33 John iii. 19.

intelligible to all unprejudiced minds : truth will shine through the vail in which it is arrayed, and the shadow will guide you to the substance. But these proud, these self-conceited Pharisees, who are so blinded by their own prejudices that they will neither hear nor understand a thing plainly delivered, to them I preach in parables, and hide the great truths of the gospel under such metaphorical robes as will ever conceal them from persons of their own temper. They have, therefore, brought upon themselves this blindness, that in seeing they see not, and this wilful deafness, that in hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The blessed Jesus added that there was no reason for their being surprised at what he had told them, as it had long before been predicted by the prophet Isaiah, “ By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed ; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” Matt. xiii. 14, 15. There is some variation in the words as quoted by the evangelist and those found in Isaiah ; but the import of both is the same, and may be paraphrased in the following manner : The sons of Jacob shall indeed hear the doctrines of the gospel, but not understand them, and see the miracles by which these doctrines are confirmed, without perceiving them to be wrought by the finger of God ; not because the evidences produced by the Messiah are insufficient, but because the corruption of their hearts will not suffer them to examine and weigh these

evidences; for the sins of this people have hardened their hearts; their pride and vanity have shut their ears; and their hypocrisy and bigoted adherence to tradition and forced interpretations of the law and the prophets have closed their eyes, lest the brilliant rays of truth should strike their sight with irresistible force, and the powerful voice of Divine Wisdom rouse their attention and command their assent—they being unwilling to be directed to the paths of righteousness, which lead to the heavenly Canaan.

Such are the reasons given by our blessed Saviour for his teaching the people by parables; and, to enhance the great privilege his disciples enjoyed, he added that many patriarchs and prophets of old, had earnestly desired to see and hear these things which they now saw and heard, but were denied that favor—God having, till then, showed them to his most eminent saints in shadows only, and as they lay brooding in the womb of futurity.

Our Lord, having by these means excited the desire of his disciples, proceeded to explain to them the parable of the Sower. Having ended the interpretation of this awakening parable, he continued his discourse to his disciples, explaining to them, by the similitude of a lighted lamp, the use they were to make of all the excellent instructions they had and should receive from him.

Having explained these parables to his disciples, he turned himself to the multitude on shore, and, in his usual endearing manner, delivered the parable of the enemy sowing tares among the wheat.

He spoke another parable concerning the seed that sprang up secretly, representing the gradual and silent

progress of the Gospel. He informed them, under this similitude, that the husbandman does not, by any efficacy of his own, cause the seed he casts into the ground to grow; but leaves it to be nourished by the teeming virtues of the soil, and by the enlivening rays of the sun; so in the same manner Jesus and his apostles, having taught men the doctrine of true religion, were not by any miraculous force to constrain the will, far less by the terrors of fire and sword, to interpose visibly in the assistance of it; but suffer it to spread by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit, till it attains its full effect. The ministers of religion must not, however, from hence, imagine that religion will grow without their carefully and importunately, “night and day,” pressing its precepts upon the minds of their hearers. Mark iv. 26.

The next parable he spake to the multitude was that of the mustard-seed, which, though very small when sown, becomes, in Palestine and other parts of the East, a full-spreading tree—intimating to his audience, under this similitude, that, notwithstanding the gospel would at first appear contemptible, from the ignominy flowing from the crucifixion of its Author, the strictness of its precepts, the weakness of the persons by whom it was preached, and the small number and mean condition of those who received it, yet, being founded on truth itself, it would increase to an astonishing magnitude, filling the whole earth, and affording a spiritual nourishment to all persons of all nations, who should enjoy all the privileges of the Messiah’s kingdom equally with the Jews.

Our blessed Saviour concluded his discourse to the multitude with the parable of the leaven, to intimate

the influence of the doctrine of the gospel on the minds of particular persons. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Matt. xiii. 33.

While Jesus was thus employed in his heavenly Father's business, his mother and brethren came a second time, desiring to see him. In all probability, they feared that the continued fatigue of preaching would injure his health, and were, therefore, desirous of taking him with them, that he might refresh himself. But the blessed Jesus, who was never weary of doing good, answered his indulgent parent as before: "My mother and my brethren, are these which hear the word of God, and do it?" Luke. viii. 21.

Night approaching, Jesus dismissed the multitude, and returned to the house in Capernaum where he abode, and there explained to his disciples the parable of the tares in the field. The husbandman, said our blessed Saviour, is the Son of man; the field, the Christian church, planted in different parts of the world; the wheat are those that believe in Christ, who obey the precepts of the gospel, and are supported by the influences of the Holy Spirit; and the tares, the bad professors, seduced into the paths of vice by the temptations of the devil. Our blessed Lord, therefore, by this parable, represented the mixed nature of the church on earth, the dismal end of the hypocrites, and those who forget God: for these may deceive for a time, by assuming the robes of virtue and religion, yet they will not fail, sooner or later, to betray themselves, and show that they are only wolves in sheep's clothing. At the same time,

however sincerely we may wish to see the church freed from her corrupted members, we must not extirpate them by force,* lest, being deceived by outward appearances, we also destroy the wheat, or sound members. We must leave this distinction to that awful day, when the great Messiah will descend to judgment; for then, a final separation will be made—the wicked cast into torments that will never have an end; but the righteous received into life eternal, where they “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Matt. xiii. 43.

Our Lord, on this occasion, delivered the parables of the treasure hid in the field, and of the pearl of great price. The former was designed to teach us that some meet with the gospel as it were by accident, and without seeking after it, agreeably to the prediction of the prophet, that God is “found of them that seek him not.” But, with regard to the latter, it was designed to intimate that men sometimes take the utmost pains to become acquainted with the great truths of the gospel. And surely the similitudes, both of the treasure and pearl, are very naturally used to signify the gospel—the former, as it enriches all who possess it, and the latter, because it is more precious than rubies.

But, that the disciples might expect that the Christian church would, in time, consist of a mixed multitude of

* Force is not discipline, but persecution. How does this parable condemn the whole system and practice of persecution, or as it has been called by bloody men, “the extirpation of heretics.” Christian discipline, as taught in the New Testament by Christ and his Apostles, is a very different thing, and is to be faithfully executed on all offenders, according to the law and the evidence, by every church of Christ. Matt. v. 23, 24; xviii. 15–35. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. 1 Cor. v. 1–13. 2 Cor. ii. 6–9. 2 Thess. iii. 6–15. Titus iii. 10, 11.

people, the good blended with the bad, in such a manner that it would be difficult to separate them, he compared it to a net cast into the sea, which gathered fish of every kind, good and bad; which were separated when the net was drawn to land—that is, at the last great day of accounts, when the righteous will be conveyed to life eternal, and the wicked cast into everlasting misery.*

Our blessed Saviour, having finished these parables, asked his disciples if they understood them; and, upon their answering in the affirmative, he added, that every teacher of the gospel ought to resemble a person whose house was completely furnished, and who brought “forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

Soon after, Jesus left Capernaum and repaired to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and preached in the synagogue the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; but his townsmen, though astonished at his doctrine, could not overcome the prejudices they had conceived against him on account of the obscurity of his family, and thence refused to own him for the Messiah. Our Saviour, finding them the same incorrigible persons as when he visited them before, departed from them, and taught in the neighboring villages. They, in common with all the Jews, were strangers to the true character of the Messiah, whom they considered as a temporal prince, and therefore could not bear that a person so mean as Jesus appeared to be should perform works

* This parable is not to be so strained in its interpretation, as to sanction the indiscriminate reception of all into the Christian church irrespective of the evidence of repentance and faith; for this would contradict the doctrine and practice of Christ himself (John iv. 1, 2) and of his Apostles. Acts ii. 37–42, 47. It can only mean, therefore, that the perfect discrimination impossible now, shall be made in the final judgment hereafter.

peculiar to that idol of their vanity, a glorious, triumphant, secular Messiah.

While our Lord remained in the neighborhood of Nazareth, he sent out his disciples to preach in different parts of Galilee, and to proclaim the glad tidings that God was then going to establish the kingdom of the Messiah, wherein he would be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And, in order that they might confirm the doctrines they delivered, and prove that they had received their commission from the Son of God, they were endowed with the power of working miracles.* How long they continued their preaching cannot be known; but it is reasonable to think they spent a considerable time in it, preaching in several parts of Judea.

The miracles which the apostles wrought raised the expectations of men higher than ever: the people were astonished to see the disciples of Jesus perform so many miracles, and thence concluded that our Saviour must be greater than any of the old prophets, who could not transmit the power they enjoyed to others. This extraordinary circumstance could not fail of spreading his fame through all the country: it even reached the ears of Herod the Tetrarch, who, fearing a person of such extraordinary abilities, was very uneasy; which some of his courtiers, observing, endeavored to remove, telling him that one of the old prophets was risen from the dead; but this did not satisfy him, and he declared that he believed it was John the Baptist risen from the

* The Mission of the Twelve Apostles is to be distinguished from their appointment, which was more than a year before this. All the intervening time they were in a course of theological training. Their Mission is dated by Robinson in February A. D. 32.

dead: "And he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." Matt. xiv. 2.

The evangelists, having on this account mentioned John the Baptist, inform us that Herod had put him to death; but when this happened is uncertain.*

It has already been observed that Herod had cast John into prison for his boldness in reproving him for the unlawful affinity in which he lived with his brother's wife. The sacred writers have not told us how long he continued in prison; but it is plain, from his two disciples, who came from him to our Saviour, that his followers did not all forsake him in his melancholy condition. Nay, Herod himself both respected and feared him, knowing that he was highly and deservedly beloved by the people: he consulted him often, and in many things followed his advice. But Herodias, his brother's wife (with whom he lived in so shameful a manner), being continually uneasy, lest Herod should be prevailed upon to set him at liberty, sought all opportunities to destroy him; and at last an incident happened which enabled her to accomplish her intentions.

The king having on his birthday made a great feast for his friends, she sent her daughter Salome, whom she had by Philip, her lawful husband, into the saloon,

* We know not, it is true, the date of Herod's birthday, on which he gave the fatal order for the death of John, but that it fell not far from the beginning of the year (A. D. 32) seems evident from several concurring circumstances. The return of the Twelve from their first mission tour is fixed by Dr. Robinson, in April of that year, and it appears at that time to have been a recent occurrence, of which every one was talking, and from the shock of which Herod's guilty conscience had not yet recovered

to dance before the king and his guests. Her performance was remarkably elegant, and so charmed Herod that he promised, with an oath, to give her whatsoever she asked.

Having obtained so extraordinary a promise, she ran to her mother, desiring to know what she should ask, and was instructed by that wicked woman to require the head of John the Baptist. Her mother's desire doubtless surprised Salome, as she could not possibly see the use of asking what could be of no service to her. But Herodias would take no denial, peremptorily insisting on her demanding the head of the Baptist. Accordingly, she returned to Herod, saying, "I will that thou give me by-and-by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist."

So cruel a request thrilled every breast: the gayety of the king vanished; he was vexed and confounded. But, being unwilling to appear either rash, fickle, or false, before a company of the first persons of his kingdom for rank and character, he commanded the head to be given her—not one of the guests having the courage to speak a single word in behalf of an innocent man, or attempt to divert Herod from his mad purpose, though he gave them an opportunity of doing it, by signifying to them that he performed his oath merely out of regard to the company. Thus Herod, through a misplaced regard to his oath and his guests, committed a most unjust and cruel action—an action that will forever brand his memory with dishonor and render his very name detestable to the latest posterity.

Soon after the command was given, the head of that venerable prophet, whose rebukes had struck Herod

with awe in the loosest moments, and whose exhortations had often excited him to virtuous actions, was brought, pale and bloody, in a charger, and given to the daughter of Herodias in the presence of all the guests.

The young lady eagerly received the bloody present, and carried it to her mother, who enjoyed the whole pleasure of revenge, and feasted her eyes with the sight of her enemy's head, now silent and harmless. But she could not silence the name of the Baptist; it became louder, filling the earth and heavens, and publishing to every people and nation this woman's baseness and adultery.

Thus fell that great and good man, John the Baptist, who was proclaimed by our blessed Saviour himself to be "more than a prophet." Josephus tells us that his whole crime consisted in exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue, and in the first place to piety, justice, and regeneration or newness of life—not by the bare abstinence from this or that particular sin, but by an habitual purity of mind and body.

It may not be improper on this occasion to hint that the history of this birthday, transmitted to posterity in the Scriptures, stands a perpetual beacon, to warn the great, the gay, and the young to beware of dissolute mirth. Admonished by so fatal an example, they should be careful to maintain, in the midst of their jollity, an habitual recollection of spirit, lest reason at any time, enervated by the pleasures of sense, should slacken the rein of wisdom or let it drop, though only for a moment; because their headstrong passions, ever impatient of control, may catch the opportunity, and rush with them

into follies or crimes whose consequences will be unspeakably—perhaps eternally—bitter.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR LORD ADDS TO THE CONFIRMATION OF HIS MISSION AND DOCTRINE BY WORKING A MIRACLE IN THE WILDERNESS OF BETHSAIDA—THE PEOPLE, STRUCK WITH THE POWER AND GRACE OF THE BLESSED JESUS, PROPOSE TO RAISE HIM TO THE EARTHLY DIGNITY OF KING—PETER, BY MEANS OF HIS BLESSED MASTER, PERFORMS A MIRACLE IN WALKING UPON THE SEA.

THE disciples were so alarmed at the cruel fate of the Baptist, whose memory they highly revered, that they returned from their mission and assisted in performing the last offices to the body of their old master—many of the apostles having been originally the disciples of John. As soon as the pious rites were over, they repaired to Jesus, and told him all that had happened.*

* It is evident that our author understands the words, "his disciples," in Matt. xiv. 17, of the disciples of Jesus, *i. e.*, the apostles. It is true, they had *all* formerly been the disciples of John (see Acts i. 21, 22); but the context here, evidently refers to those disciples of John who had remained, up to the time of his death, attached more or less closely to his person. During his imprisonment, they would not forsake him; but after bestowing upon his corpse a solemn burial, they did him still higher honor as a true Prophet and the special witness to the Messiah, by going to

Their compassionate Master, on hearing this melancholy news, retired with them by the sea into a desert place belonging to Bethsaida,* that by retirement, meditation, and prayer they might be refreshed and recruited for their spiritual labors, and at the same time leave an example to us, that we should often retire from the noise and hurry of the world and offer up the most fervent prayers to our heavenly Father.

But the multitude attended so closely that the departure was not long concealed; and great numbers of people repaired to the place where they supposed Jesus and his disciples had secluded themselves. Struck with the greatness of his miracles on those that were sick, and anxious to hear more instruction from the mouth of so divine a teacher, no difficulties were too great for them to surmount, nor any place too retired for them to penetrate, in search of their admired Preacher.

Nor was the beneficent Saviour of the world regardless of their pious esteem. He saw them, and was "moved with compassion" toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, multitudes of people without a pastor, a large harvest without laborers—

Jesus, and enrolling themselves as his followers. In this way the great end of John's ministry was accomplished. John iii. 25-30.

* There were two cities of this name, one on the northwest, and the other on the northeast side of the sea of Galilee. The former was the birth-place and abode of Philip, Andrew, and Peter, and was about a mile south of Capernaum; the latter was east of the Jordan before it enters the sea, and about three miles back from the shore, from which it is separated by a plain of great fertility. The desert here referred to, lay some distance south of it.

This Bethsaida was in Gaulonitis, out of the dominion of Herod Antipas, and was under the government of his brother Philip.

motives abundantly sufficient to excite compassion in the Son of God.

The situation of these numerous throngs of people, scattered abroad, without a guide, without a guardian, a flock of defenceless sheep, without a single shepherd to defend them from the jaws of the infernal wolf, was truly deplorable: therefore, the blessed Jesus, that "Good Shepherd who came to lay down his life for the sheep," was moved with pity toward them: the same pity which brought him from the courts of heaven, for the sake of his lost and wandering sheep in the desert, now brought him to this multitude of people, whom he instructed in the doctrines of eternal life, and, with his usual goodness, healed all the sick among them.

Intently devoted to teaching and healing of the people, our blessed Saviour did not perceive the day to wear away, and that the greatest part of it was already spent; but his disciples, too anxious about the things of this world, thought proper to advise him of it—as if the Son of God wanted any directions from man. The day, said his disciples, is now far advanced, and the place a solitary desert, where neither food nor lodging can be procured: it would therefore be convenient to dismiss the people, that they may repair to the towns or villages on the borders of the wilderness and provide themselves with food and lodging; for they have nothing to eat.

But our Lord prevented that trouble, by telling them there was no necessity for sending the people away to procure victuals for themselves, as they might satisfy the hunger of the multitude by giving them to eat, and at the same time, to prove what opinion his disciples entertained of his power, addressed himself to Philip,

who was well acquainted with the country, and said, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"

Philip, astonished at the seeming impossibility of procuring a supply for so great a multitude with the small sum of money which he knew was their all, and forgetting the extent of his Master's power, answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." John vi. 7.

Our blessed Saviour might now have put the same question to Philip that he did on another occasion: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" John xiv. 9. Hast thou beheld so many miracles, and art still ignorant that I can supply food, not only for this people, but for all the sons of men, and for the "cattle upon a thousand hills?"

But he contented himself with answering, "Give ye them to eat." The twelve, not yet comprehending the design of their Master, repeated the objection of Philip, but added that they were willing to expend their whole stock, in order to procure as large a supply as possible. "Shall we go," said they, "and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, that they may eat?"

But this was by no means the design of their Great Master, who, instead of making a direct answer to their question, asked them, "How many loaves have ye?" How much provision can be found among this multitude? Go and see.

The disciples obeyed the command of their Master; and Andrew soon returned, to inform him that the whole stock amounted to no more than five barley loaves and two small fishes—a quantity so inconsiderable that

it scarcely deserved notice. "What are they," said the disciples, "among so many?" What, indeed, would they have been among such a multitude of people, if they had not been distributed by the creating hand of the Son of God?

Jesus, notwithstanding the smallness of the number, ordered them to be brought to him, and immediately commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, with which the place abounded, directing his disciples at the same time to range them in regular order, by hundreds and fifties in a company, each company forming a square containing a hundred in rank and fifty in file, that the number might be more easily ascertained and the people more regularly served.

The multitude being seated, Jesus took the loaves and fishes into his hands, in sight of all the people, that they might be convinced of the small quantity of provisions that were then before them, and that they could only expect to be fed by his supernatural power. But that hand, which had constantly sustained nature, could now easily multiply these five loaves and two fishes; for, as the Psalmist elegantly observes, "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness." Accordingly, he looked up to heaven, returned thanks to God, the liberal giver of all good things, for his infinite beneficence in furnishing food for all flesh, and for the power he had conferred on him of relieving mankind by his miracles, particularly for that he was about to work. This done, he blessed them; and so peculiarly efficacious was his blessing that these five barley loaves and two fishes were multiplied into a quantity sufficient to supply the wants of five thousand men, besides wo-

men and children, who, on the most favorable supposition, must amount to an equal number. "And Jesus took the loaves; and, when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would." John vi. 11.

Thus did the compassionate and powerful Redeemer feed at least ten thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fishes, giving a magnificent proof both of his power and goodness. For, after all had eaten to satisfy, they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces—a much larger quantity than was at first set before our Lord to divide.

The people, when they had seen the Saviour of the world perform so stupendous a miracle, were astonished above measure, and, in the height of their transport, purposed to take Jesus by force and make him a king, concluding that he must then assume the title of the Messiah, whose coming they had so long earnestly expected, and under whose reign they hoped to enjoy all kinds of temporal felicity.

But our Lord, well knowing the intentions of the multitude, and the inclinations of his disciples to second them, ordered the latter to repair immediately to their boat and sail to Bethsaida, while he sent away the multitude. They would, it seems, gladly have detained the people, with whom they fully agreed in sentiments, and even lingered till he constrained them to get into the boat, so fully were they still possessed of the opinion that their Master was to take the reins of government and become a powerful prince over the house of Jacob.

The people suffered the disciples to depart without

the least remorse, as they saw that Jesus did not go with them.

Perhaps they imagined he was sending them away to provide such things as they had need of. Nor did they refuse to disperse when he commanded them, purposing to return in the morning, as we find they actually did.

Having thus sent the disciples and the multitude away, Jesus himself repaired to the summit of a mountain, spending the evening in heavenly contemplation and ardent prayers to his Almighty Father.

But the disciples, meeting with a contrary wind, could not continue their course to Bethsaida, which lay about two leagues to the northward of the desert mountain where the multitude were miraculously fed. They, however, did all in their power to land as near that city as possible, but were tossed up and down all the night by the tempest; so that in the fourth watch, or between three and six o'clock in the morning, they were yet above a league from the shore.

Their divine Master beheld from the mountain their distressed situation; but they were ignorant of his presence, though he was coming to their relief. Such was the state of the disciples: they were tossed by boisterous waves, and opposed in their course by the rapid current of the wind, so that all hopes of reaching the place intended were vanished; when, behold, their heavenly Master, to assist them in this distressful situation, comes to them, walking on the foaming surface of the sea.

Their Lord's approach filled them with astonishment: they took him for an apparition, and shrieked for fear. Their terrors were, however, soon removed: their great and affectionate Master talked to them, with the

sound of whose voice they were perfectly acquainted. "Be of good cheer," said the blessed Jesus: "It is I: be not afraid."

Peter, a man of warm and forward temper, beholding Jesus walking on the sea, was exceedingly amazed, and conceived the strongest desire of being enabled to perform so wonderful an action.

Accordingly, without the least reflection, he immediately begged that his Master would bid him come to him on the water. He did not doubt but that Jesus would gratify his request, as it sufficiently intimated that he would readily undertake any thing, however difficult, at the command of his Saviour. But it appeared that his faith was too weak to support him to that height of obedience to which he would have willingly soared. To convince this forward disciple of the weakness of his faith, and render him more diffident of his own strength, our blessed Saviour granted his request. He ordered him to come to him upon the water.

Peter joyfully obeyed his divine Master: he left the boat, and walked on the surface of the sea. But the wind, increasing, made a dreadful noise, and the boisterous waves at the same time threatened to overwhelm him. His faith now staggered; his presence of mind forsook him; he forgot that his Saviour was at hand; and in proportion as his faith decreased the waters yielded, and he sunk. In this extremity he looked around for his Master, and on the very brink of being swallowed up, cried, "Lord, save me!" His cry was not disregarded by his compassionate Saviour: "he stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto

him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Peter was convinced, before he left the ship, that **it** was Jesus who was coming to them on the water: nor did he even doubt it when he was sinking, because he then implored his assistance. But when he found the storm increase, and the billows rage more terribly than before, his fears suggested that either his Master would be unable or unwilling to support him amid the frightful blasts of the tempest.

This miracle alarmed the disciples; for, though they had so lately seen the miracle of the five loaves, they did not seem to have formed a proper idea of his power; but, being persuaded that he could be no other than the expected Messiah, they "came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Matt. xiv. 33.

Our Saviour seems to have confirmed this miracle by working another; for the evangelists tell us that he had no sooner entered the ship and hushed the violence of the storm, than they arrived at the place whither they were going. "Then they willingly received him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land, whither they went." John vi. 21.

When our Lord disembarked, the inhabitants of the neighboring country ran to him, bringing with them all those that were sick; and they were all healed. It must be remembered that, though Jesus ordinarily resided in the neighborhood of Capernaum, yet he had been absent ever since his visiting Nazareth; and therefore it is natural to think that the inhabitants, on his return, would not omit the opportunity of bringing their sick in

such prodigious crowds, that it seems our Saviour did not pay particular attention to each of them, and this was the reason of their beseeching him "that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." Matt. xiv. 36.

The virtue of that power by which he wrought these miracles, lay not in his garments, for then the soldiers who seized them at his crucifixion might have wrought the same miracles; but it was because Jesus willed it to be so. It was now the acceptable time, the day of salvation, foretold by Isaiah; and Christ's power was sufficient to remove any distemper whatsoever.

No sooner did the cheering rays of light appear than the multitude left their retreats and searched for Jesus in every part of the mountain, to the summit of which they had seen him retire. Finding their search in vain, they concluded he must have departed to the other side. Accordingly they repaired to Capernaum, where they found him in the synagogue teaching the people, and could not help asking him, with some surprise, "Rabbi, how camest thou hither?"

Jesus solemnly replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." By the miracle of the loaves my Father has testified my mission, and typified the true, the spiritual, the heavenly bread, of which the manna was but a symbol. That was sufficient only for a single nation; this is sufficient for all the children of men. "I am the

bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst."

Because I do not affect the authority and pomp of an earthly monarch, you reject me as an impostor. Your unbelief does not proceed from want of evidence, as you vainly pretend, but from the perverseness of your own dispositions, which may in time perhaps be overcome: for "all that the Father giveth me, shall come to me," and, however obstinate for a season, they shall yet believe in the Son of God. Nor will I ever reject any that come to me, however low their circumstances may be, however vile they may appear in their own eyes, or however greatly their violence against my doctrine may have been excited. I came down from heaven not to act according to the common method of human passions, which excite men to return evil for evil, but to bear with them, to try all possible means to bring them to repentance and lead them in the strait paths of virtue to the mansions above. It is the will of my Father to bestow eternal life on all who believe in me, and therefore I will raise them up at the last day.

These things and more Jesus spoke in the hearing of all the people of the synagogue at Capernaum. He even went so far as to say that he would give his flesh in sacrifice for the life of the world; and in allusion to the customs of the Jews, and their notions of feasting upon their sacrifices, added: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you."

The self-sufficient and self-righteous Jews were so offended at this doctrine that, though they had professed

to be his followers, they went away, and would hear him no more. Jesus said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered for all: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 68, 69.

CHAPTER XV.

PHARISAICAL SUPERSTITION SEVERELY REPRIMANDED—THE GREAT REDEEMER CONTINUES TO DISPLAY HIS POWER AND BENEVOLENCE IN THE RELIEF OF SEVERAL OBJECTS OF AFFLICTION—GUARDS HIS DISCIPLES AGAINST THE PREVAILING ERRORS AND FALLACIES OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—PROCEEDS ON THE WORKS OF HIS HEAVENLY FATHER.

THE Pharisees were sensible they could not perpetrate their malicious designs upon him on that occasion; they therefore followed him, hoping to find something by which they might accuse him, and at length ventured to attack him for permitting his disciples to eat with unwashed hands, because, in so doing, they transgressed the tradition of the elders.

Moses had, indeed, required external cleanness as a part of their religion, but it was only to signify how careful the servants of the Almighty should be to purify themselves from all uncleanness, both of flesh and spirit. These ceremonial institutions were, in process

of time, prodigiously multiplied : and the Pharisees, who pretended to observe every tittle of the law, considered it as a notorious offence to eat bread with unwashed hands, though at the same time they suffered the more weighty precepts of the law to be neglected and forgotten.

To expose the absurdity of such superstitious customs, our Saviour applied to them the words of the prophet Isaiah : “ This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me ;” adding, that all their worship was vain, and displeasing to the Almighty, while they praised themselves, and imposed upon others the frivolous precepts of man’s invention, and at the same time neglected the eternal rules of righteousness ; and, to remove all objections that might be brought against this imputation of gross profaneness in the Pharisees, he supported it by a very remarkable instance. God, said the Saviour of the world, hath commanded children to honor their parents, and to maintain them when reduced to poverty by sickness, age, or misfortunes ; promising life to such as obey this precept, and threatening death to those who disregard it. But, notwithstanding the peremptory commandment of Omnipotence, you teach that it is more sacred in children to enrich the temple than to nourish their parents, although reduced to the utmost necessity ; pretending that what is offered to the Great Parent of the universe is much better bestowed than what is given to the support of our earthly parents ; making the honor of God absolutely different from the happiness of his creatures. Nay, ye teach that it is no breach of the commandment for a man to suffer his parents to perish, provided he has given what ought to nourish them to the temple at Jerusalem. Thus have

ye concealed, under the cloak of piety, the most horrid, the most unnatural crime any person can commit.

Having thus reproved the Pharisees, he called the multitude to him, and desired them to reflect on the absurdity of the precepts inculcated by the Scribes. These hypocrites, said he, solicitous about trifles, neglect the great duties of morality, which are of eternal obligation. They shudder with horror at unwashed hands, but are perfectly easy under the guilt of a polluted conscience, though they must be sensible that “not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” Matt. xv. 11.

The haughty Pharisees were highly offended at his speaking in a degrading manner of their traditions. And the apostles, who would gladly have reconciled their Master and the Pharisees, insinuated to Jesus that he ought to have acted in another manner. To which our Saviour answered, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” Matt. xv. 13. As if he had said, You have no cause to fear their anger, as both they and their doctrine shall perish together, for neither of them came from God: adding, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Matt. xv. 14.

His disciples, not fully comprehending this doctrine, desired their Master to explain it. This our Saviour complied with, and showed them that meats, being of a corporeal nature, could not defile the mind of man, nor render him polluted in the sight of the Almighty, unless they were used to excess or in opposition to the com-

mandment of God; and even then the pollution arose from the man, and not from the meat. But, on the contrary, that which proceedeth out of the mouth of a man comes from his heart and really polluteth his mind.*

These doctrines of truth could not fail of irritating the Pharisees, as they tended to strip them of the mask with which they concealed their deformity and rendered themselves so venerable in the eyes of the vulgar; and therefore their plots were levelled against his reputation and life.

Jesus, to avoid their malice, retired to the very borders of Palestine, to the coast of those two celebrated Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon,† proposing there to con-

* This doctrine, that all sin proceeds from the heart of man—even when it consists in following the evil suggestions of others—is not new. It pervades the Old Testament Scriptures, and is inseparable from all just views of the spirituality of God and of his law. The ceremonial law, as well as the moral, was designed to keep the people in continual remembrance of it in every form, so far as types could do it, until Christ came; and yet the Pharisees (like the Traditionists of all ages) were perfectly blind to it, and multiplied outward ceremonies as the substitutes for inward purity and love. Hence, the pungent rebukes of our Lord, and his solemn re-affirming of the great principle, that Human Traditions, whatever guise they assume, and however ancient and almost universal they become, can never be accepted by the Searcher of hearts as a part of his service, or as obedience to his will. “In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Mark vii. 7.

† Tyre and Sidon were the chief cities of Phœnicia (or Phenice, as it is written in the New Testament), a maritime region on the eastern border of the Mediterranean sea, about two hundred miles in length, and from ten to fifty in breadth. Tyre, near the mouth of the river Leontes, was its southern extremity, and Laodicea (or Itakia), where Lebanon joins the Anzeyry mountains, bounds it on the north. This fertile and well watered region abounded with magnificent cities, in the time of our Saviour, enriched by commerce, but enervated by idolatry, luxury, and vice. Of these cities, Tyre and Sidon, at the narrow southern extremity, were the principal. Sidon (or Zidon), the most ancient of all, it is said,

ceal himself for a time ; but he could not be hid. It was as impossible for the Sun of righteousness to be concealed where he came with his healing wings and message of peace, as it is for the sun in the firmament when he riseth in all his glory, “ as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and as a giant rejoiceth to run his course. For a certain woman of Canaan, having heard of him, determined to implore his assistance. She was, indeed, one of the most abject sort of Gentiles, a Canaanite, one of that detested race with which the Jews would have no dealings, nor even conversation ; but, notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, she threw herself, as an humble petitioner, on the benevolent mercies of the Son of God. Strong necessity urged her on, and insuperable distress caused her to be importunate. Alas ! unhappy parent ! her only daughter, her beloved child, had an unclean spirit and was grievously vexed with a devil. When her case was so urgent and her woes so poignant, who can wonder that she was importunate and would take no refusal from this divine Person, who she knew was able to deliver her ? Accordingly,

was founded by Zidon, the first-born son of Canaan. This whole splendid region fell within the lot of the tribe of Ashur, but was never possessed by the Israelites. The cities were confederate and powerful, and were governed by their own kings, even in the days of David and Solomon. They were first conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who took Tyre after a siege of thirteen years' duration, and laid it in ruins. Still the insular city, or port, remained, and rose into eminence in the time of the Persians. This also was taken, after a seven months' siege, by Alexander the Great, who employed the ruins of the old city to build a causeway to the new (which was on an island four miles out from the shore), stormed and burned it. Again it rose from its ashes, and became more flourishing than Sidon, under the Greeks and Romans. Phœnicia was attached to the province of Syria, in our Saviour's time, and hence the woman of Canaan is called a Syro-Phœnician. Mark vii. 26.

she came; she besought him; she cried, saying, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy." I plead no merits: as a worthless, suffering wretch, I entreat only the bowels of thy mercy; I entreat it, for I believe thee to be the Son of David, the promised Messiah, the much desired Saviour of the world; have mercy on me, for the case of my child and her distresses are my own: "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Matt. xv. 22.

Is it not, at the first view, astonishing that such a petitioner should be apparently rejected, and that by a bountiful Redeemer, who kindly invited all that were heavy laden to come to him? who promised never to cast out any that would come, and whose business it was "to go about doing good?"

We, however, find that he answered this woman not a word: he did not, in appearance, take the least notice either of her or her distress. But this silence did not intimidate her: she still cried, she still besought, she still importunately pressed her petition, so that the very disciples were moved with her cries and became her advocates. They themselves, though Jews, besought their Master to dismiss this petitioner, to grant her request and send her away.

But Jesus soon silenced them by an answer agreeable to their own prejudices: "I am not sent," said he, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* To this the disciples readily assented; and, as they had a

* The personal ministry of Christ was purposely devoted to the Jewish nation, though his salvation was designed, in due time, to reach every people. Samaritans and Greeks found him accessible and gracious, and confessed him as "the Saviour of the world." John iv. 42; xii. 20-32.

high opinion of the Jew's prerogative, were so well satisfied with the answer that we hear them pleading no more for this lost, this miserable Gentile.

But this soothed not her griefs : it was her own cause ; and what is immediately our own concern animates us to the most zealous application. Somewhat encouraged that she was the subject of discourse, she ventured to approach the Saviour of the world, though she well knew that the law actually forbade such an intercourse ; yet she came ; she worshipped “ this Son of David,” she confessed again his divinity, and prayed, saying : “ Lord, help me.”

The compassionate Saviour now condescended to speak to her, but with words seemingly sufficient to have discouraged every further attempt—nay, to have filled her with bitter dislike to his person, though she had conceived such high and noble notions of his mercy and favor : “ It is not meet,” said he, “ to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.” Matt. xv. 26. It is not justice to deprive the Jews, who are the children of the covenant, the descendants of Abraham, of any part of those blessings which I came into the world to bestow, especially on you, who are aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

This answer, though seemingly severe, could not shake her humility nor overcome her patience : she meekly answered, “ Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table.” Matt. xv. 27. Let me enjoy that kindness which the dogs of any family are not denied ; from the plenty of miraculous cures which thou bestowest on the Jews, drop this one to me, who am a poor distressed heathen ; for they

will suffer no greater loss by it than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are cast to the dogs. Our Lord, having put the woman's faith to very severe trial, and well knowing that she possessed a just notion of his power and goodness, as well as of her own unworthiness, wrought with pleasure the cure she solicited in behalf of her daughter, and at the same time gave her faith the praise it so justly deserved: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matt. xv. 28.

After performing this miracle, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis.* In this country, a man was brought to him who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. Objects in distress were always treated with benevolence by the holy Jesus; but, as the people now thronged about him, in expectation that he would soon establish his kingdom, he thought proper to take the man, with his relations, aside from the multitude; after which he put his fingers in his ears and touched his tongue, that the deaf man, who could not be instructed by language, might know from whence all his benefits flowed. He then "looked up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Eph-

* Decapolis (as the name denotes in Greek) was the region of the ten cities—Gadara, Pella, Gerasa, Scythopolis, Hippos, Philadelphia, Dios, Raphanæ, Ortogos, and Damascus. It lay south of the Sea of Galilee, on both sides of the Jordan, but chiefly on the east, toward the ford Jabbok. Though belonging to Israel, it was settled quite largely by foreigners, and hence its foreign name. Jesus had visited the neighborhood of Gadara once before, and the Gadarenes had desired him to depart out of their coasts. The testimony of the restored demoniac seems to have prepared a better reception for him this time. Mark v. 18-20.

phatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man." Mark vii. 34, 35, 36.

But, notwithstanding they were enjoined to secrecy, the man, or his relations, published it in every part of the country, doubtless thinking they could not be too lavish in the praises of so great a benefactor, especially as the modesty with which he had performed the cure abundantly demonstrated that his sole view was the benefit of the human race.

Miracles like these could not fail of astonishing the spectators, especially those performed upon the dumb; for it must be remembered that he not only conferred on those the faculty of hearing, and pronouncing articulate sounds, but conveyed at once into their minds the whole language of their country; they were instantly acquainted with all the words it contained, their signification, their forms, their powers, and their uses: at the same time they enjoyed the habit of speaking it both fluently and copiously. This was surely enough to demonstrate to the most stupid that such works could have been effected by nothing less than infinite power, "The multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel." Matt. xv. 31.

The various works performed by the blessed Redeemer detained the multitude in the desert with him three days, during which time they consumed all the provisions they had brought into this solitary place. But Jesus would not send them away fasting, lest any who

had followed him so far from their habitations should faint in their return. Accordingly he again exerted his almighty power, to feed the multitude a second time in the wilderness.

After feeding the multitude miraculously, Jesus retired into a district called Dalmanutha, a part of the territory of Magdala.* Here he was visited by the Pharisees, who, having heard that he had a second time fed the multitude miraculously, were fearful that the common people would acknowledge him for the Messiah: and therefore determined openly and publicly to confute his pretensions to that character.

In order to do this, they boldly demanded of him a sign from heaven: for it must be remembered, that the Jews expected the Messiah would make his first public appearance in the clouds of heaven, and in a glorious manner establish a temporal kingdom. This opinion they founded on the following prophecy of Daniel, which they understood literally;† “I saw in the night visions,

* Magdala was a city of some note on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, about midway between Tiberias and Capernaum, being about three miles distant from each. It was the residence of Mary Magdalen, a woman of wealth, who having been delivered from a terrible demoniac possession by our Saviour, afterward devoted herself most gratefully to his service. Dalmanutha was the district around Magdala, as Genuesareth was around Capernaum, but more hilly and less fertile.

† A literal interpretation may sometimes be a perverse one, and so it was here. For the prophet did not describe the Son of man as coming from heaven to earth (as they imagined), but as ascending from earth to heaven to receive his mediatorial throne; and this he did literally after his resurrection from the dead.

There is a class of Christian interpreters in our day, who commit the same mistake, and yet claim to be *literal* interpreters. Undoubtedly, Christ will come at his Second Advent in the clouds of heaven, in like

and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Daniel vii. 13, 14.

It is therefore evident that the Pharisees, by desiring Jesus to show them a sign from heaven, meant that he should demonstrate himself to be the Messiah, by coming in a visible and miraculous manner from heaven, and wresting with great pomp the sceptre of David from the hands of the Romans.

Their disposition was absolutely incorrigible; so that Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit, and declared that the sign they sought should never be given them; and that the only sign they were to expect was that of the prophet Jonas, or the miracle of his own resurrection: a sign indeed much greater than any shown by the ancient prophets; and consequently a sign which demonstrated that Jesus was far superior to them all. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Matt. xvi. 4.

Having thus reproved the impertinent curiosity of the Pharisees, he departed, with his disciples, and entered into a ship; and as they sailed, he cautioned them to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which he termed leaven, from its pernicious influence in

manner as he ascended (Acts i. 11); but the vision of Daniel in question does not refer to the Second Advent, but to the Ascension of Christ.

filling the minds of men with pride, and other irregular passions.

On his landing at Bethsaida, they brought unto him a blind man, desiring that he would heal him. Jesus accordingly took the man by the hand, and led him out of the city, and having spit upon his eyes, and put his hands upon him, asked him if he saw aught? To which the man answered, "I see men as trees walking." A very proper expression to convey an idea of the indistinctness of his vision. Jesus then put his hands again upon him, and he was restored to sight, "and saw every man clearly."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLESSED JESUS DELEGATES POWER TO PETER, ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES—PRONOUNCES THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD, AND IS AFTERWARD TRANSFIGURED UPON THE MOUNT.

JESUS, having displayed his power and goodness in restoring the blind man to his sight, departed from Bethsaida, and returned to the territory of Cesarea Philippi, where, being desirous of proving in some measure the faith of the apostles, he asked them, saying, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Matt. xvi. 13, 14.

The people in general mistook the character of our Saviour. Jesus was therefore desirous of hearing what

idea his disciples formed of his character, as they had long enjoyed the benefit of his doctrine and miracles, and accordingly asked them what they themselves understood him to be. To this question Simon Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Saviour acknowledged the title, telling Peter that God alone had revealed the secret* to him. And in allusion to his surname, Peter, which signifies a rock, our Saviour promised that upon himself, as the foundation (and by means of this very faith and confession which Peter had just made, of his being "the Christ, the Son of the living God"), he would build his Church, and that *he* should have a principal hand in establishing the Messiah's kingdom, never to be destroyed. "Other foundation can no man lay." 1 Cor. iii. 11. On him may our souls rest, and the fiercest tempest shall rage in vain! "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. xvi. 18, 19.†

* This does not imply that Jesus had hitherto kept his Messiahship a secret, for this is contrary to the facts recorded by the Evangelists; but that this great truth, so mysterious to the mass of the nation, and so unwelcome to worldly minds, had been made plain and precious to his renewed heart by the power of divine grace. This is in accordance with the general current of Scripture. 1 Cor. xii. 3; John vi. 44, 45, 65; Matt. xi. 25, 26. It must be remembered, however, that Peter spoke not for himself alone, but for the rest of the apostles, as before, at Capernaum. John vi. 67-69.

† It is important to remark, that what is here promised to Peter, is no peculiar power, or personal prerogative (as many contend), but a privi-

Having delegated this power to Peter, our Saviour strictly forbade his disciples to tell any man that he was the Messiah; because it had been foretold by the prophets that he should be rejected by the rulers of Israel as a false Christ, and suffer the pains of death, Matt. xvi. 20, circumstances which could not fail of giving his followers great offence. As they did not yet understand the true nature of his kingdom, therefore he thought proper to let every man form a judgment of his mission from his doctrine and miracles.

The foregoing discourses had doubtless filled the apostles with lofty imaginations, and therefore our Saviour thought proper to acquaint them with his sufferings, in order to check any fond expectation of temporal power. Peter, however, was greatly displeased to hear his Master talk of dying at Jerusalem, when he had just before acknowledged the title of Messiah. Accordingly, he rebuked him for the expression, which he was so bold as to think unguarded. But Jesus, turning himself about, said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Matt. xvi. 23.

Peter's conduct, in this respect, arising from an immoderate attachment to earthly objects, our Saviour

lege shared in common with him, not only by his fellow apostles, but by all professed believers in the Church of Christ, in every land and age. See Matt. xviii. 17, 18. "The keys of the kingdom of heaven" are contained in the Gospel of Christ, and every man who rightly understands and opens the Gospel, whether in doctrine, discipline, experience, or practice, uses these keys. Thus Peter first used them to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Acts ii. 10. This is the only "primacy" Peter ever had.

thought proper to declare publicly that all who intended to share with him the glory of the heavenly Canaan must deny themselves; that is, they must be always ready to renounce every worldly pleasure, and even life itself, when the cause of religion requires it: he also told them that in this world they must expect to meet with troubles and disappointments, and that whoever intended to be his disciple, must "take up his cross and follow him."

Thus did the blessed Jesus fully explain to his disciples the true nature of his kingdom, and at the same time intimated that, though they had already undergone many afflictions, yet they must expect still more and greater, which they must sustain with equal fortitude, following their Master in the footsteps of his afflictions. This duty, however hard, was absolutely necessary; because by losing their temporal life they would gain that which was eternal: "For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke ix. 24. "For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26.

To add to the weight of this argument, and to enforce the necessity of self-denial, our Saviour particularly declared that a day was fixed for distributing rewards and punishments to all the human race, and that he himself was appointed by the Father as universal Judge, so that his enemies could not flatter themselves with the hope of escaping the punishment they deserved, nor his friends be afraid of losing their eternal reward. "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and my words, in this

adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Mark viii. 38.

About eight days after this discourse, our blessed Saviour, being with the multitude in the country of Cesarea Philippi,* left them in the plain, and, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, ascended an exceedingly high mountain.†

In this solitude, while Jesus was praying with these

* Cesarea Philippi, the capital of Trachonitis, under Philip the Tetrarch, was formerly called Paneas. It was rebuilt and enlarged by Philip, and named Cesarea in honor of Tiberius Cæsar. To distinguish it from Cesarea on the Mediterranean, built by Herod the Great, it was called Cesarea Philippi. It was situated on an elevated plateau, near the eastern sources of the Jordan, about three miles east of Dan, and about twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Mount Hermon, robed in snow, rises, on the north, to the altitude of ten thousand feet, towering far above all the mountains of Syria, and forming the northeastern boundary of Palestine.

† This "high mountain," being in the neighborhood of Cesarea Philippi, is not Mount Tabor, but Mount Hermon, as is now generally agreed. Tabor was fifty miles distant, was but about twelve hundred feet high, and in the time of Christ was fortified, and held by a Roman garrison. All these circumstances combine to discredit the tradition that Mount Tabor was the scene of the Transfiguration, while every thing conspires to show that Mount Hermon, the grandest mountain in Syria or Palestine, was selected for that grand event. It is the loftiest summit of the range of Lebanon, and is three thousand feet higher than Mount Sinai in Arabia. In some places Hermon is called Sion (not Zion), Sirion, and Shenir. Deut. iii. 8; iv. 39.

From a hill north of Nazareth, Dr. Hackett saw Mount Hermon on the northeast, and says, "It rose immensely above every surrounding object." How familiar, then, must it have been to the eye of Jesus from his youth! And, if we may suppose it to be "the exceeding high mountain" from which Satan tempted him by a view of the glory of this world, how fitly was it chosen for the display of the brighter glories of another world!

three disciples, he was transfigured: his face became radiant and dazzling; it shone like the sun in his meridian clearness. At the same time, his garments acquired a snowy whiteness, far beyond any thing human art could produce—a whiteness bright as the light, and sweetly refulgent, but in a degree inferior to the radiance of his countenance.

Thus, as it were, for an instant, the Son of God, during his state of humiliation, suffered the glory of his divinity to shine through the vail of human nature with which it was covered; and, to heighten the grandeur and solemnity of the scene, Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, a zealous defender of the law, appeared in the beauties of immortality—the robes in which the inhabitants of the heavenly Canaan are adorned. The disciples, it seems, did not see the beginning of this transfiguration: happening to fall asleep,* at the time of prayer, they lost that pleasure, together with a great part of the conversation which these two prophets held with the only-begotten Son of God.

They, however, understood that the subject was his meritorious suffering and death, by which he was to redeem the world; a subject that had, a few days before, given great offence to his disciples, particularly to Peter. At beholding the illustrious sight, the disciples were greatly amazed: but, the forwardness of Peter's disposition prompting him to say something, he uttered he

* This drowsiness, at such a time, would seem incredible, or at least highly culpable, did we not recollect the great fatigue which followed the ascent of so high a mountain, and the solemn silence of nature around them. It was not the only instance in which "the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak."

knew not what: "Master," said he, "it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Mark ix. 5.

This disciple imagined that Jesus had now assumed his proper dignity; that Elias was come, according to Malachi's prediction, and the Messiah's kingdom was at length begun. Accordingly, he thought it was necessary to provide some accommodations for his Master and his august assistants, intending, perhaps, to bring the rest of the disciples, with the multitude, from the plain below, to behold his matchless glory. This, he thought, was much better for his Master than to be put to death at Jerusalem, concerning which Jesus had been talking with the messengers from heaven, and the design of which Peter could not comprehend.

But "while he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."* Matt. xvii. 5.

When the three disciples heard the voice, which, like the roaring thunder, burst from the cloud, and was such as

* The appearance of Moses and Elias, the one the giver and the other the defender of the Law, seems evidently designed to show, by their united testimony, that the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled and honored in the death of Jesus for our sins; and their disappearance, followed by the voice from heaven, proclaimed that all their authority was henceforth to be absorbed in the higher teachings of the Son of God. The Mosaic and Christian Dispensations find their true point of union in HIM, "whose decease was about to be accomplished at Jerusalem."

Peter would have built "three" tabernacles; but while he speaks, Moses and Elias vanish, and the Lord of glory remains alone. Tabernacle, and altar, and worship, belong only to him; nor shall any one arise to rival or supersede him, who is forever "the Head of all principality and power." Col. ii. 9, 10.

mortals were unaccustomed to hear, they fell on their faces and continued in that posture till Jesus approached, raised them up, and dispelled their fears, saying unto them, "Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." Matt. xvii. 7, 8.*

Jesus, having continued all night with his three disciples on the mountain, returned to the plain early in the morning, charging them to conceal what they had seen till after he was risen from the dead. He well knew that the world, and even his own disciples, were not yet able to comprehend the design of his Transfiguration, and that if it had been published before his resurrection, it might have appeared incredible ; because nothing but afflictions and persecutions had hitherto attended him. He was truly "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

* All the events in this chapter, according to Dr. Robinson, occurred in May, A. D. 32, nearly a year before the Crucifixion. They were all designed to prepare the apostles for that, to them, most mysterious close of our Lord's personal ministry, by establishing their faith in him as a suffering and redeeming Messiah. That death of ignominy, which they on earth dreaded above all things, was shown to be the object of deepest interest to the inhabitants of heaven, and essential to the Saviour's highest glory, as well as our salvation.

CHAPTER XVII.

OUR SAVIOUR RELIEVES A YOUTH TORTURED WITH A DUMB SPIRIT—CONFORMS CHEERFULLY TO THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY, BY PAYING THE TRIBUTE—REPROVES THE PRIDE OF HIS DISCIPLES, AND DELIVERS SOME EXCELLENT MORAL PRECEPTS.

WHEN our Lord approached the descent of the mountain, accompanied by his three disciples, he saw a great multitude surrounding the nine who continued in the plain, and the Scribes disputing with them. The people, seeing Jesus coming down from the mountain, ran to him and saluted him with particular reverence. After which, Jesus asked the Scribes what was the subject of their debate with his disciples. To which one of the multitude answered, “Master, I have brought unto thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit: and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.” Mark ix. 17, 18.

This answer, being made by one of the multitude, and not by the Scribes, to whom the question was directed, indicates that they had been disputing with the disciples on their not being able to cure this afflicted youth: perhaps their making this unsuccessful attempt had given the Scribes occasion to boast that a devil was at length found which neither they nor their Master could conquer. This seems to be indicated by the manner in which our Saviour addressed himself to these

arrogant rulers. "O, faithless generation!" says he, "how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Must I always bear with your infidelity? After speaking in this manner to the Scribes, he turned himself to the father of the young man, and said, "Bring thy son hither." But no sooner was he brought in sight of his deliverer, than the evil spirit attacked him, as it were, with double fury: "The spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming." Mark ix. 20.

Jesus could easily have prevented this attack; but he permitted it that the minds of the spectators might be impressed with a more lively idea of this youth's distress. And for the same reason probably it was that he asked the father how long he had been in this deplorable condition. To which the afflicted parent answered, "Of a child: and oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Mark ix. 21, 22.

The inability of our Lord's disciples to cast out this spirit had greatly discouraged the afflicted father; and the exquisite torture of his son, and the remembrance of its long continuance, so dispirited him that he began to fear this possession was even too great for the power of Jesus himself, as the Scribes had probably before affirmed, and therefore could not help expressing his doubts and fears. But Jesus, to make him sensible of his mistake, said to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." On which the father cried out, with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The vehement manner in which he spake

causing the crowd to gather from every quarter, Jesus rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." Mark ix. 25.

No sooner was the powerful exit pronounced than the spirit, with a hideous howling, and convulsing of the suffering patient in the most deplorable manner, came out, leaving the youth senseless and without motion, till Jesus, taking him by the hand, restored him to life, and delivered him, perfectly recovered, to his father.

The nine disciples, during this whole transaction, remained silent. They were, doubtless, mortified to think that they had lost, by some fault of their own, the power of working miracles, lately conferred upon them by their Master, and, for this reason, were afraid to speak to him in the presence of the multitude. But when they came into the house, they desired Jesus to inform them why they had failed in their attempt to heal that remarkable youth. To which Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief." But, to encourage them, he described the efficacy of the faith of miracles: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Matt. xvii. 20. Nothing shall be too great for you to accomplish, when the glory of God and the good of the church are concerned, provided you have a proper degree of faith: even yonder mountain, which bids defiance to the storm and smiles at the attacks of its mingled horrors, shall, at your command, leave its firm basis and remove to another place.*

* If the mountain here referred to was Mount Hermon, as is probable,

The expulsion of the dumb spirit seems to have astonished the disciples more than any other miracle they had seen their Master perform ; so that our Saviour found it necessary to moderate their high admiration of his works, by again predicting his own death, and retiring for a time into the most unfrequented parts of Galilee.

After a short tour through the desert part of Galilee, Jesus returned into Capernaum, the place of his general residence. Soon after his arrival, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him whether his Master would pay the tribute. That disciple, it seems, had promised that Jesus would satisfy their demand, but, on a more mature consideration, feared to ask him concerning his paying taxes, on any pretence whatever.*

Jesus was, however, no stranger to what had happened, and the fear of Peter to ask him, and therefore turned his discourse to this subject, by saying unto him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free;" insinuating that, as he was himself the Son of the Great

what new force does it give to this remarkable declaration. See the last two notes.

* It does not appear obvious why Peter should fear to speak to Jesus on paying the temple tax to the collectors. He had doubtless always paid it before, and therefore Peter at once answered the collectors in the affirmative. Why then did he afterward doubt? Was it that their money was exhausted during their long tour in Northern Galilee? Or was it that his new ideas, derived from the Transfiguration, made him doubt whether it was to be paid any more? Probably both motives were combined; and the words of Jesus supply a full answer to both his difficulties. The other disciples may have paid already, so that he only and Jesus were concerned in the question.

King, to whom heaven, earth, and the sea belong, he was not bound to pay tribute to any monarch whatever, because he held nothing by a derived right. Or, if we suppose this contribution was made for the service and reparation of the temple, he meant that, as he was the Son of that omnipotent Being to whom the tribute was paid, he could have justly excused himself. But the blessed Jesus was always careful not to give offence, and therefore sent Peter to the lake, with a line and hook, telling him that in the mouth of the first fish that came up he should find a piece of money equal to the sum demanded of them both.* “Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast the hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” Matt. xvii. 27.

Our Lord took this extraordinary method of paying the tribute money in this manner, because the miracle was of such a kind as could not fail to demonstrate that he was the Son of the Great Monarch worshipped in the temple and who rules the universe. In the very manner, therefore, of paying this tribute, he showed Peter that he was free from all taxes, and at the same time gave

* The silver *stater* (whose value was equal to the Jewish shekel) would just pay the temple tax for two.

That the exact sum required for both would be found in the first fish caught—found in the mouth, and not in the belly—presupposes *omni-science* in Jesus. It shows further that not only did “the winds and the sea obey him,” but “whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” Ps. viii. 8. The very coin is specified in the original language of Jesus—the Greek *stater*—a coin equal in value to four Roman *denarii*, or one Jewish shekel. The temple tax was a half shekel for each.

this useful lesson to his followers, that, when the property is affected only in a small degree, it is better to recede a little from their just right than to offend their brethren or disturb the state by obstinately insisting on it.

The disciples, convinced that it was in vain to conceal the subject of the debate that had happened on the way, drew near to their Master, desiring him to decide a point which had often given occasion to disputes: "Who," said they, "is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Matt. xviii. 1. Jesus, to check these foolish emulations in his disciples, called a little child unto him, and placed him in the midst, that they might consider him attentively, and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 3. Unless ye be humbled by the power of divine grace, and brought to a due sense of the vanity of all earthly preferments, riches, and honors, and become meek and humble in spirit, ye shall be so far from becoming the greatest in my kingdom, that ye shall never enter its borders. But whosoever shall be satisfied with the station in which God has placed him, receive with meekness all the divine instructions, however contrary to his own inclinations, and prefer others to himself, that man is really the greatest in my kingdom. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 4.

It appears, from circumstances, that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were principally concerned in this debate, for we find that John endeavored to divert it by telling his Master that they had seen one casting out

devils in his name, and had forbidden him, because he did not join himself to their company; to which Jesus replied, "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." Mark, ix. 39.

You should, added the blessed Jesus, consider that every one who does not persecute us is a friend: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Mark ix. 41.

But, on the other hand, the least discouragement given to his disciples in the propagation of the gospel, come from what quarter it will, shall be punished with the greatest severity. "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." Mark, ix. 42.

From this saying, Jesus inferred, that it was more advantageous to deny ourselves the highest enjoyments of this world, and to part with every thing, however precious, represented by a hand, a foot, or an eye, than by these to cause the weakest of his friends to stumble. And as they were to be the salt of the earth, it was requisite they should themselves be filled with the spiritual salt of all the graces, and particularly the holy salt of love and peace.

Pride is the source of numberless sins; and therefore the blessed Jesus cautioned his disciples, in the most solemn manner, to beware of that vice; assuring them, that the meanest child is an object of the care of Providence; and "that their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

To show the concern of his Almighty Father for the least of his reasonable creatures, and the great value he sets upon the souls of the human race, our Saviour told them, that he not only gave his highest angels charge concerning them, but had also sent his only begotten Son to seek and to save that which was lost; and would share in the joy which the heavenly beings are filled with on their recovery. Matt. xviii. 12, 13, 14.

Having thus addressed the offending party, he turned himself toward his disciples, and gave them instructions with regard to the offended. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

If the offending brother continues impenitent after all the methods above described are tried, his guilt is bound the faster upon him; because, by the precepts of the gospel, none but penitents can obtain pardon.

Our blessed Saviour also added, as an encouragement to good men, that if they continued earnest in their endeavors to bring sinners to repentance, and offered up their prayers to the Almighty for assistance, he would always grant their petitions, provided they were agreeable to the wise ends of his providence. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done

for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

Peter had before heard his Master speak of the doctrine of frequent forgiveness, and thought it a strange doctrine which obliged him to forgive offences seven times repeated; but our blessed Saviour told him that he was very greatly mistaken: that he never intended to limit forgiveness to seven times, but that it ought to be extended even to seventy times seven.

This excellent moral precept he enforced by the parable of the two servants, debtors to one lord; in order to show the necessity of forgiving the greatest injuries in every case where the offending party is sensible of his fault, and promises amendment; because on this condition alone, our heavenly Father will forgive our offences.

So likewise, added the Son of God, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matt. xviii. 34, 35. And surely this awful threatening ought to strike the minds of fierce and implacable men with terror. For whatever they may think, it will certainly, in its full extent, be inflicted upon all who refuse to obey the dictates of divine mercy, and forgive not only their fellow-servants, but every brother in Christ, who, through weakness or inadvertence, may have done them an injury either in person or property.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR BLESSED LORD QUITS GALILEE FINALLY—HE GOES UP PRIVATELY TO JERUSALEM—ADDRESSES THE MULTITUDE AT THE SOLEMN FEAST OF TABERNACLES—EXEMPTS THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY FROM THE PUNISHMENT ANNEXED BY THE JEWS TO THAT CRIME—ESCAPES FROM THE SNARES LAID FOR HIM BY THE INVETERATE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

THE great Redeemer, having finished his Father's work in Galilee, departed into Judea.* The Feast of Tabernacles now drew on, at which all the males of the Jewish nation, capable of travelling, repaired to Jerusalem, and dwelt in the tabernacles, or booths made of the boughs of trees, in commemoration of their fathers having had no other habitation during their forty years' sojourning in the wilderness.† To this feast some of the kinsmen of the blessed Jesus desired he would accompany them and there show himself openly to the whole nation of the Jews. They did not themselves believe that he was the great Prophet so long expected, and therefore

* The reader should clearly notice the important fact that this departure of Jesus from Galilee was final. Jesus did indeed meet his disciples in Galilee after his resurrection; but his public ministry in that region closed at this time, and was transferred to Judea and Perea, for the remaining six months of his life. This fact gives new interest to the words recorded in Luke ix. 51-62.

† The Feast of Tabernacles fell on the fifteenth day of the Jewish month Tisri, and corresponded nearly to the last days of October with us. It was also called the Feast of Harvest, and was celebrated like the Passover for eight days, the first and eighth of which were Sabbaths, or holy days.

condemned the method he pursued in his public ministry as altogether absurd.* “If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.” John vii. 3-5.

“My time,” said the blessed Jesus to these unbelieving relations, “is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up *yet* unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.” John vii. 6-18. As if he had said, You may repair to the capital whenever you please; the Jews are your friends, you have done nothing to displease them; but the purity of the doctrine I have preached to them, and the freedom with which I have reprovèd their hypocrisy and other enormous crimes, have provoked their malice to the utmost height, and therefore, as the time of my sufferings is not yet come, it is not prudent for me to go so soon to Jerusalem.

There was also another reason why our blessed Saviour refused to accompany these relations to the Feast of Tabernacles: the roads were crowded with people, and these,

* Unbelief is always attended with its natural penalty of short-sightedness. The methods of divine wisdom are beyond its range and comprehension, yet it presumes to judge and to dictate, as if it held the seat of infinite authority. Had these unbelieving kinsmen of Jesus been able to see but two weeks ahead, they might have spared their bitter taunts on this occasion. The plan of the Redeemer was timed to the very hour, and he was actually prepared to take the bold step at that very feast, to which they, as it were, dared him. But he chose to do it in a private way, that enabled him to escape the crowds pressing up to Jerusalem, and to despatch seventy more of his disciples under a solemn commission to prepare his way in Perea and Judea. Luke x. 1-16. This accomplished, he took the direct route through Samaria to Jerusalem, and suddenly appeared there in the midst of the feast.

gathering around him and accompanying him to Jerusalem, would, doubtless, have given fresh offence to his enemies, and have in a great measure prevented his miracles and doctrines from having the desired effect. He therefore chose to continue in Galilee till the crowd were all gone up to Jerusalem, when he followed, as it were, in secret, neither preaching nor working miracles by the way, so that no crowd attended him to the feast.*

The road from Galilee to Jerusalem lay through Samaria, and the inhabitants were those who entertained the most inveterate hatred against all who worshipped in Jerusalem. Jesus, being no stranger to this disposition of the Samaritans, thought proper to send messengers before him, that they might, against his arrival, find reception for him in one of the villages. The prejudiced Samaritans, finding the intention of his journey was to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, refused to receive either him or his disciples into their houses.

The messengers, being thus disappointed, returned to Jesus, and gave him an account of all that had passed ; at which James and John were so exceedingly incensed that they proposed to their Master to call fire from heaven, in order to destroy such inhospitable wretches ; alleging, in excuse for such violent proceedings, the example of the prophet Elijah : “ Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did ? ” Luke ix. 54.

Our Lord, desirous of displaying an example of humility on every occasion, sharply rebuked them for entertaining so unbecoming a resentment for this offence

* See the foregoing note.

“Ye know not,” said he, “what manner of spirit ye are of.” Ye are ignorant of the sinfulness of the disposition ye have now expressed; nor do ye consider the difference of times, persons, and dispensations. The severity exercised by Elijah on the men who came from Ahab to apprehend him was a just reproof of an idolatrous king and people, very proper for the times, and very agreeable to the characters both of the prophet who gave it and of the offenders to whom it was given, and, at the same time, not unsuitable to the Mosaic dispensation. But the gospel breathes a very different spirit; and the intention of the Messiah’s coming into the world was not to destroy, but to save, the lives of the children of men.

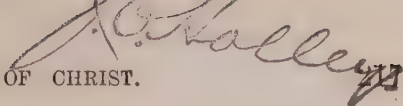
Ye wise of this world, who reject saving knowledge, behold here an instance of patience, under a real and unprovoked injury, which you cannot parallel among all your boasted heroes of antiquity!—an instance of patience which expressed infinite sweetness of disposition, and should be imitated by all the human race, especially by those who call themselves the disciples of Christ.

As our blessed Saviour’s ministry was from this time till its final period to be confined to Judea and the countries beyond Jordan, it was necessary that some harbingers should be sent into every town and village he was to visit, to prepare his way. Accordingly, he called seventy disciples unto him, and, after instructing them in the duties of their mission and the particulars they were to observe in their journey, he sent them into different parts of the country, to those particular places whither he himself intended to follow them and preach the doctrines of the gospel to the inhabitants. Our

Lord, according to his own declaration, despatched these disciples on the same important message as he had done the twelve before.

The harvest was plenteous in Judea and Perea, as well as in Galilee, and the laborers also few ; and, being nevermore to preach in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, the cities wherein he had usually resided, he reflected on the reception he himself had met with from the inhabitants of those cities. He foresaw the terrible consequences that would flow from their rejecting his doctrine and the many kind offers he had made them. He was grieved for their obstinacy ; and, in the overflowing tenderness of his soul, he lamented the hardness of their hearts. “ Woe,” said he, “ unto thee, Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.” Luke x. 13–15. To which our Saviour added, as some consolation to his disciples, “ He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.” Luke x. 16.

Such a token of heavenly regard could not fail of comforting the Seventy and alleviating their minds when thinking of the ill usage they expected to meet with during the course of their mission. They well knew that the preaching of Christ himself had been often despised, and often unsuccessful, with respect to many of his hearers ; and therefore they had no very



great reason to expect that they should find a more welcome reception than their Master.

As Jesus did not go up openly to Jerusalem, so neither did he, on his arrival, repair to the temple and there preach openly to the people. This gave occasion to several disputes among the Jews with regard to his character. Some affirmed that he was a true prophet, and that his absenting himself from the feast could only be owing to accident; while others as confidently asserted that he only deceived the people, and paid no regard to the institutions they had received from Heaven.

But about the middle of the feast Jesus appeared openly in the temple, and taught the people, delivering his doctrines with such strength of reasoning, and elegance of expression, that his very enemies were astonished, knowing that he had never enjoyed the advantage of a learned education. "Now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying: How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John vii. 14, 15.

To which the Redeemer of mankind replied: My doctrine was not produced by human wisdom: the sages of the world were not my instructors: I received it from Heaven; it is the doctrine of the Almighty, whose messenger I am: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." John vii. 16. Nor can he who is desirous of practising the doctrines I deliver, if he will lay aside his prejudices and sincerely desire to be taught of God, be at a loss to know from whom my doctrines are derived; because he will easily discern whether they are conformable to the will of man or of God. It is not difficult to discover an impostor, because all his precepts tend to

advance his own interest and gratify his pride ; whereas all the doctrines delivered by a true prophet have no other end than the glory of God, however contrary they may prove to himself. “ He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory ; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.” John vii. 18.

The Scribes and Pharisees were highly provoked at this attachment of the common people to Jesus ; and accordingly, on the last and great day of the feast, they met in council, and sent several officers to apprehend him and bring him before them.

Jesus, during these transactions in the Council, continued in the temple, teaching the people. My ministry, said he to the multitude, is drawing near its period ; and therefore you should, during the short time it has to last, be very careful to improve every opportunity of hearing the word ; you should listen with the greatest attention to every discourse, that your minds may be stored with the truths of the Almighty, before I return to my Father ; for after my departure you shall earnestly wish for the same opportunities of seeing me and hearing my instructions, but shall never obtain them. “ Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me ; and where I am, thither ye cannot come.” John vii. 33, 34.

The Jews, who did not understand that our blessed Saviour alluded to his own death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, whither their sins would not permit them to follow him, wondered at this doctrine, and imagined that he intended to leave Judea and preach to their brethren dispersed

among the Gentiles. But if he did go and preach among the Gentiles, they thought it was not impossible for them to follow him thither: "Then said the Jews among themselves, What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" John vii. 35, 36.

While the Divine Teacher was thus instructing the people in the temple, the water from Siloam was brought in, according to the appointment of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, part of which they drank with loud acclamations, in commemoration of the mercy showed to their fathers, who were relieved by a stream which miraculously flowed from a rock and refreshed a whole nation then ready to perish with thirst in a dreary and sandy waste; and the other part they poured out as a drink-offering to the Almighty, accompanying it with their prayers for the former or latter rain to fall in its season; the whole congregation singing the following passage: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isaiah xii. 3.

It was the custom of the blessed Jesus to deliver spiritual instructions in allusion to many occurrences that happened; and, accordingly, he took this opportunity of inviting, in the most affectionate manner, all who were desirous of knowledge or happiness to come to him and drink, alluding to the ceremony they were then performing. And, to encourage all such as were desirous of believing in him, he promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit, which he represented under the similitude of a river flowing out of their hearts. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink

He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John vii. 37, 38.

During this discourse to the people, the officers from the Council came to apprehend him; but, hearing that the topic he was discussing was a singular one, and he seemed to deliver his discourse with remarkable fervor, their curiosity induced them to listen some time before they laid hands on him. But the eloquent manner in which he delivered his subject appeased their rage; the sweetness of his disposition, and the plainness and perspicuity of his discourse, elucidated the beauties of truth, and caused them to shine before the understanding with their native lustre. Accordingly, his very enemies, who were come from the Council on purpose to apprehend him, were astonished; the greatness of the subject, made, as it were, visible by the divine speaker, filled their understandings; the warmth and tenderness with which he delivered himself penetrated their hearts; they felt new and uncommon emotions, and, being overwhelmed with the greatness of their admiration, were fixed in silence and astonishment: they condemned themselves for having undertaken the office, and soon returned to the rulers of Israel without performing it.

If our Lord had pleaded for his life before the officers of the Council who were sent to apprehend him, the success of his eloquence, even in that case, had been truly wonderful; but in the case before us it surely was superior to all praise, for, in a discourse addressed to others, and even on a spiritual subject, it disarmed a band of inveterate enemies and made them his friends.

Nor were the officers the only persons affected by this

discourse; for many others declared he must be one of the old prophets, and others that he was none other than the Messiah himself. Some, however, led away with the common mistake that he was born at Nazareth, asked, with disdain, if the Messiah was to come out of Galilee, and whether they would acknowledge a Galilean for the Messiah, when the Scriptures absolutely declared that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the native town of his father David. "Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" John vii. 40-42.

Such were the dissensions on this subject, that some of his enemies, knowing that the officers were sent to apprehend him, threatened to lay hands on him; but the Almighty would not suffer them to execute their wicked design: "And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him." John vii. 44.

The officers now returned to the Council, and were asked why they had not brought Jesus of Nazareth. To whom the officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." This reply enraged the Council, who reviled them for presuming to entertain a favorable opinion of one whom they had pronounced an impostor. It is strange, said they, that you, who are not ignorant of our sentiments concerning this person, should entertain a favorable idea of him. Have any persons of rank, or any celebrated for their knowledge of the laws, believed on him? Are not his followers the lower orders of the

people, who are totally ignorant of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah? The officers made no answer to the railing accusations of their masters. But Nicodemus, a member of the Council, arraigned their conduct in a very poignant manner: "Does our law," says he, "condemn any man before he has been heard?"* They had before condemned their officers for being ignorant of the law, when it appeared they were themselves far more ignorant, in pretending to condemn a person before they had proved him guilty. They were acting directly contrary to the fundamental principles of the law of equity at the time they boasted of their profound knowledge of its precepts.

Incensed at this reprimand of Nicodemus, they asked him, with an air of disdain and surprise, if he was also one of those mean persons who had joined together to support the pretences of a Galilean, though the Scriptures had plainly said that Bethlehem was the place of the Messiah's nativity; adding that if he refused to listen to them he should soon be convinced that the great prophet mentioned by Moses was not to be born in Galilee. "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." John vii. 52.†

* This is the first time we hear of Nicodemus after his private interview with Jesus. John iii. 1-20. Here, after two years and a half, he appears in his seat in the Sanhedrin, confronting the injustice of that body, and all but confessing himself a disciple of the Son of God. The words of Jesus were not wholly lost upon him. A new element has entered the great Council of the nation, the element of faith and justice, and it breaks up its former unanimity in overbearing wrong. Here is a rallying point for others who are inclining to the right. Joseph of Arimathea at least supports him, and the Council breaks up in disorder.

† The effects of *partial* knowledge (when the whole is necessary to a sound judgment) are quite conspicuous in both parties of this learned

Having made this reply to Nicodemus, the Council broke up, and Jesus, who knew their malicious intentions, retired to the Mount of Olives, where he spent the night with his disciples.

Our blessed Lord, early the following morning, returned to the temple and again taught the people. The Scribes and Pharisees now determined to render him odious to the multitude, or obnoxious to the Roman governor, and therefore placed before him a woman who had been taken in the act of adultery, desiring his opinion what punishment she ought to suffer. "This woman," said they to Jesus, "was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now, Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?" John viii. 4, 5.

Had our Lord disapproved the sentence of the law, they would, doubtless, have represented him to the multitude as a person who contradicted Moses and favored adultery—which could not have failed of rendering him odious to the people. On the other hand, had he ordered her to be stoned, it would have afforded a plausible pretence for accusing him to the Roman governor as a person who stirred up the people to rebellion—the Romans having now taken the power of life and death into their own hands.

But Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions,

body, on this occasion. The majority were right in the position that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, but wrong in the conclusion that Jesus was *not* born there. Perhaps the minority were not prepared at the time to prove it from the record of his birth. But when the majority declared that, "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," they must have forgotten that Galilee was the birthplace of Jcnah, or in the heat of the moment, wilfully ignored it.

made no answer, but “stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” John viii. 6. They, however, still continued pressing him to give an answer; and, at last, Jesus (in allusion to the law, which ordered that the hands of the witnesses by whose testimony an adulterer was convicted should be the first upon him) said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Let those who are remarkably zealous for having justice executed upon others at least take care to purify themselves from all heinous crimes.

This reply had its desired effect. The hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees were convicted of sin by their own consciences, so that they immediately retired, fearing Jesus would have made their particular sins public. “And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.” John viii. 9. The woman’s accusers being all retired, Jesus told her that as no man had pronounced sentence of death upon her, neither would he pronounce it, but charged her to be very careful for the future to avoid the temptations which had induced her to commit so black a crime.

The wisdom, knowledge, and power of our blessed Saviour were eminently displayed on this occasion: his wisdom, in defending himself against the malicious attempts of his enemies; his knowledge, in discovering the secrets of their hearts; and his power, in making use of their own consciences to render their artful intentions abortive.

It was therefore with remarkable propriety that the great Redeemer of mankind now called himself the

“light of the world :” as if he had said, I am the spiritual sun, that dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition in which the minds of men are immersed, and discovers the path that leads to eternal life ; nor shall any who follow me ever be involved in darkness. “I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John viii. 12.

This assertion of our Lord highly provoked the Pharisees, who told him he must be a deceiver, because he boasted of himself. To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied : You are not to imagine that I called myself the light of the world, from a principle of pride and falsehood : that title justly belongs to me ; nor would you yourselves refuse to acknowledge it, did you know from what authority I received my commission, and to whom, when I have executed it, I must return. But of these things ye are totally ignorant, and therefore judge according to outward appearance, and condemn me because I do not destroy those who oppose me, as you vainly think the Messiah will do those who shall refuse to submit to his authority. But the design of the Messiah’s coming is very different from your mistaken notions ; he is not come to destroy, but to save, the children of men. “ Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true ; for I know whence I came, and whither I go ; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh : I judge no man.” John viii. 14, 15. He added that, if he should condemn any person for unbelief, the condemnation would be just, because his mission was true, being confirmed by his own testimony and that of his Almighty Father, the God of

Jacob, by whose authority, and agreeably to whose will, all his sentences would be passed ; “And yet if I judge, my judgment is true ; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.” John viii. 16.

Having thus asserted the divinity of his mission, and shown that his judgment was just, he proceeded to inform them that his Father himself bare witness to the truth of his mission. You cannot, said he, justly complain, even if I should punish you for your unbelief, because you are, by your own laws, commanded to believe the testimony of two witnesses that my mission evidently is true. For the actions of my life, which are perfectly agreeable to the character of a messenger from Heaven, bear sufficient witness of me ; and the Father, by the miracles he has enabled me to perform, beareth witness of me ; ye are therefore altogether culpable in objecting to my mission. “It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.” John viii. 17, 18.

The Jews then asked him, Where is thy Father, the other witness to whom thou appealest ? Jesus replied, Your conduct sufficiently demonstrates that ye are strangers both to me and my Father ; for, had ye known who I am, ye must have also known who it is I call my Father ; had ye been convinced that I am the Messiah, ye must have also been convinced that the Father is no other than that Omnipotent Being who created and upholds all things by the word of his power. Then said they unto him, “Where is thy Father ?” Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father : if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” John viii. 19.

This discourse, the evangelist tells us, was held in the treasury, a court of the temple where the chests were placed for receiving the offerings of all those who came to worship in the temple, and therefore must have been a place of great resort, being frequented by all, even the priests and rulers. But, notwithstanding the public manner in which our blessed Saviour now asserted his claim to the character of the Messiah, no man attempted to seize him—Providence not suffering them to put their malicious designs in execution, because his hour, or the time of his suffering, was not yet come.

The debate being ended, Jesus again repeated what he had before told them: namely, that he should shortly depart from them, and that they should then seek him, but not be able to find him. “I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come.” John viii. 21. As if he had said: After my ascension into heaven, when the Roman armies shall spread horror and desolation in every corner of the land, ye shall then earnestly wish for the coming of the Messiah, in expectation of being delivered by his powerful arm from your cruel enemy; but ye shall then find your mistake; ye shall die in your sins, and be forever excluded from the mansions of happiness.

The Jews by no means comprehended the departure of which our Lord told them. They even fancied he would destroy himself, because they thought the only retreat where they could not find him was the gloomy habitation of the grave. To which the blessed Jesus replied, Your vile insinuation discovers at once the wickedness of your hearts and the baseness of your original. Ye are from the earth, and therefore subject to

all the evil passions that infect human nature, the source of temptation to every sin. Ye therefore must believe that I am the bread of life, the heavenly manna, the light of the world, the true Messiah, if ye are desirous of being cleansed from those pollutions which flow from your earthly origin; but if you still continue in your unbelief you shall die in your sins.

The Jews now, in order to vindicate themselves, demanded what sort of a person he pretended to be. To which Jesus answered: "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning," that is, at the beginning of this discourse, "the light of the world;" adding, "I have many things to say, and to judge of you; but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." John viii. 26.

This discourse, however plain it may appear, was not understood by the perverse Jews: they did not perceive that he spake to them of the Father. But Jesus told them, that when they crucified him, they would be convinced by the miracles accompanying and following that awful hour—the resurrection from the dead, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, and the destruction of the Jewish nation—who he was, and the Father that sent him. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things." John viii. 28.

He added that, though he should be crucified as a malefactor, that punishment would not be inflicted on him as a consequence of being deserted by his Father; because he would never leave him in any period of his

sufferings, or even at the hour of his death, as he always acted agreeably to his will.

These words induced many of the people to believe him to be the Messiah. Perhaps by lifting him up they did not understand his crucifixion, but his ascension to the throne of David; and hence supposed that he now entertained sentiments worthy of the Messiah, and were therefore very ready to acknowledge him as such and believe the doctrine he had delivered concerning his mission. But Jesus told them that if they persevered in the belief and practice of his word they should in reality become his disciples, have a title to that honorable appellation, be fully instructed in every doctrine of the gospel, and forever freed from the slavery of sin and its consequences. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii. 31, 32.

The Jews, on hearing him mention that they should be made free, answered, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." This assertion, if taken literally, was absolutely false, the whole nation at that very time being in bondage to the Romans; nor were their ancestors any strangers to slavery, having severely felt the hand of tyranny in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The expression, therefore, according to some writers, must be taken in a metaphorical sense, to signify spiritual bondage: it was a freedom by truth, a freedom in respect of religion, which they now asserted. They meant that they were the descendants of illustrious ancestors, and, during the worst of times, had preserved sentiments in religion and government worthy the pos-

terity of Abraham; nor had the hottest persecution of the Assyrian kings been able to compel them to embrace the religion of the heathen.* In respect of truth, "We were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

In answer to this question, Jesus told them that those who gave themselves up to the practice of sin and the gratification of their sinful appetites were absolute slaves; and how far they might deserve that appellation it was incumbent on them to consider. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." And as a slave cannot be assured of the continuance of his master's favor, or be certain of abiding continually in the family, so my Father can, when he pleases, discard such habitual sinners, and deprive you of the external economy of religion, of which you so highly boast, as you have, through sin, rendered yourselves bondmen to his justice. If ye are desirous of becoming the children of God, and of remaining forever in his family, you must submit to the authority of his Son and embrace his doctrine, which will induce him to adopt you as co-heirs with himself. It is he only that can make you free indeed, and place you in the city of the heavenly Jerusalem, without the least danger of

* The general phrase, "Assyrian Kings," here includes Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Darius the Mede, and Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, all of whom, at different times, held dominion over the territory of ancient Assyria, and by persecuting edicts put the fidelity of the Jews to the true God to the extreme limit of mortal trial. Daniel and his three friends were delivered from death only by special miracle, designed for the conviction of the heathen; but multitudes, in the time of the Maccabees, cheerfully underwent torture and death for the sake of their religion. Heb. xi. 33-38.

being removed. I well know that you are, in a natural sense, the seed of Abraham, but, in a moral one, the offspring of Satan; for many of you are desirous of destroying me, because I enjoy a greater degree of sanctity than you are willing to acquire. "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which you have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father." John viii. 37-39.

Notwithstanding their claim to immediate descent from the father of the faithful, Jesus told them that if they were the spiritual progeny of Abraham they would resemble that great and good man in his righteousness, and therefore, instead of endeavoring to take away the life of a person who came with a revelation from God, they would believe on him, in imitation of Abraham, who was justly styled the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham." John viii. 39, 40

The Jews, incensed at our Lord, rushed on him and attempted to stone him; but Jesus, by miraculously concealing himself, passed unhurt through the crowd, and retired out of the temple. With what patience did our blessed Redeemer bear, and with what "meekness of wisdom" did he answer, the most virulent and opprobrious language! And shall we too keenly resent the reflections that are thrown upon us? May but our consciences witness for us, and we need not fear all that are against us.

CHAPTER XIX.

OUR LORD CONTINUES TO WORK MIRACLES IN CONFIRMATION OF HIS MISSION AND DOCTRINE—CALLS FORTH AND SENDS OUT SEVENTY DISCIPLES—PREACHES TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDEA, BY WAY OF PARABLE.

THE great Preacher of Israel, having defeated the cruel designs of the obstinate Jews, in passing on his way, saw a man who had been blind from his birth. The sight of so affecting an object could not fail to excite the compassion of the benevolent Saviour of mankind. Nor could the affronts and indignities he had just received from the Jews hinder him from “working the works of him that sent him,” and dispensing blessings on that rebellious and ungrateful nation. Accordingly, he beheld this poor blind man, not with a transient view, but fixed on him the eyes of pity and presented him with the riches of his adorable love.

The disciples, observing the affectionate regard of their Master to this object of compassion, and probably imagining that he was going to extend his usual mercy to this unfortunate object, asked their Master whether his blindness was occasioned by his own sin, or the sin of his parents. They had often heard their Master say that afflictions were commonly the punishment of particular sins, and had learned, from the law of Moses, that sin was the fruitful source of evil, and that the Lord punished the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Their Master kindly answered that neither

his own* nor the sins of the parents were the immediate cause of this peculiar affliction, but that he was born blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him," particularly his sovereignty in bringing him blind into the world, his power in conferring the faculty of sight upon him, and his goodness in bearing witness to the doctrine by which men are to be saved.

We may learn, by this pertinent reply of the Saviour of the world, that a curious inquiry into the cause of

* The hypothesis of the pre-existence, fall, and transmigration of souls, is of heathen origin, of great antiquity, and of very wide diffusion. It probably sprang up in Egypt, as it is found in the hieroglyphic "Book of the Dead," laid on the breasts of mummies, embalmed (according to Mr. Gliddon) four thousand years ago, or before the age of Abraham. Thence it spread into Europe and into Asia, where it forms at this day a leading element in the doctrine of Buddhism.

As a philosophical theory to account for the origin of evil it has little value, or rather none whatever, though a few modern thinkers in the Christian church have endeavored to revive it. For, 1. It is unnecessary. 2. It is but a supposition, unsupported by any positive facts. 3. It merely removes the difficulties farther back without relieving them. 4. It generates a mass of superstition, by an unavoidable necessity. 5. It sets aside or contradicts the plain teachings of Scripture. 6. No mind, trained in the truth of Divine Revelation, and accustomed to revere it as of supreme authority, can adopt this theory without loosening the foundations of evangelical faith.

Yet it seems, from the form of the inquiry proposed by the disciples of Jesus in the case of the blind man, that this heathen doctrine was not entirely unknown to them, and that it blended in their imagination with a doctrine more Scriptural—the connection of children with their parents. The answer of our Lord denies altogether the heathen doctrine, and mercifully limits the application of the true doctrine to obvious and ascertainable causes. What a world of mischief and misery is thus swept away! Moreover, by teaching us to regard the evils of birth not merely as deplorable accidents, but as special elements of human trial and occasions of developing new forms of virtue and of Divine beneficence, it forms and nourishes the habit of searching for the hidden good entwined with the tangled web of human life.

afflictions in other men may be safely avoided, and that we ought to suppose every calamity subservient to the glory of Omnipotence--never imputing to their personal sins whatever miseries we behold in others, lest, like the disciples in the present case, we assign to sin what owes its origin to the glory of our Maker.

Having assigned the cause of this person's blindness, namely, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him," Jesus added, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work," John ix. 4; intimating to his disciples, and all the sons of men, his unwearied labor in the work of his Almighty Father. In this he was employed day and night during the time of his sojourning in the flesh. To this alone he directed all his thoughts and all his intentions. This he esteemed even as his meat and drink; and for this he suffered the neglect of his ordinary food, that he might finish the blessed, the benevolent work of human salvation—a work to accomplish which he left the courts of heaven, and, during the execution of it, went about doing good.

It was now the Sabbath day, and the blessed Jesus told his disciples that they need not be surprised to see him work miracles of that kind on the Sabbath day. For, though they should imagine that he might defer them till the day of rest was over, his time on earth was so short that it was necessary for him to embrace every opportunity that offered of working miracles. Perhaps he chose to perform this work on the Sabbath because he knew the Pharisees would, for that reason, inquire into it with the utmost attention, and consequently render it more generally known. But, how-

ever this be, our blessed Saviour, who was now going to confer sight on one that was born blind, took occasion from thence to speak of himself as one appointed to give light also to the minds of men involved in darkness: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John ix. 5.

Having declared the salutary design of his coming into the world, "he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam* (which is, by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing." John ix. 6, 7.

This miraculous operation could not fail of producing a general curiosity and surprise: it induced those who had seen this blind man in his dark and deplorable condition to be very particular in their inquiries into the means of so singular a miracle. It was doubtless the subject of general conversation, and, it is natural to

* The Pool of Siloam (or Shiloh) is situated at the base of the hill Ophel, a spur of Mount Moriah on the southeast of Jerusalem. It is now an artificial stone reservoir, fifty-three feet long, eighteen broad, and nineteen deep. Steps descend into it to the surface of the water, which is allowed to run off when three or four feet from the bottom. It is fed by the fountain of the same name, issuing from the cliff above the pool. The water flows softly, is sweet and clear, and is used for washing clothes, and other public purposes.

The use of the clay on this occasion was so singular, that we naturally ask why Jesus should resort to it, instead of curing him with a word. It had several advantages: 1. It made a special trial for the man's faith and obedience in going to the pool to wash. 2. It attracted general attention to his extraordinary case. 3. It allowed Jesus opportunity to retire from the excited crowd. 4. It added special force to the blind man's subsequent testimony to Jesus, whom he had heard and *felt*, but had not yet seen.

think; should also have proved the means of a general conversation; but, as it too frequently happens, a perverse curiosity prevented its salutary effects upon their souls. Unbelief, and hardness of heart, led some of them even to doubt of the plainest fact—a fact the most evident and indisputable, and plainly the work of the Divinity—and others, to persecute at once both the object and the author of it! “The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he; others said, He is like him; but he said, I am he.” John ix. 8, 9. The man, transported with gratitude and joy, and perceiving his neighbors to doubt the identity of his person, proclaimed himself to be the very same whom they lately saw begging in total darkness. I am he thus wonderfully blest with sight by the peculiar mercy of the Almighty! I am he who was blind from my birth, whom ye have all seen and many relieved in my miserable distress! I am he who was, even from my mother’s womb, involved in total darkness, but now enjoy the enlivening light of day.

So ingenuous an acknowledgment of the fact excited their curiosity to know how this admirable effect was produced. “How were thine eyes opened?” To this question he readily replied, “A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight.” John ix. 11. They then asked him where the person was who had performed so stupendous a work. To which the man answered, “I know not;” for Jesus had retired while the man went to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam—

probably to avoid the applauses which would naturally have been given him, and which, we see through the whole gospel, he generally studied to avoid.

The neighbors, either stimulated by envy or excited by a desire of having the truth of this extraordinary event searched to the bottom, brought the man before the Council, as the proper judges of this affair. Accordingly, he was no sooner placed before the assembly than the Pharisees began to question him, "how he had recovered his sight." Not daunted by this awful assembly, though terrible to a man of his mean circumstances, he boldly answered, "He put clay on mine eyes, and I washed, and do see." John ix. 15.

On hearing this account of the miracle, the Pharisees declared that the author of it must be an impostor, because he had, by performing of it, violated the Sabbath day. But others, more candid in their way of thinking, gave it as their opinion that no deceiver could possibly work a miracle of that kind, because it was too great and beneficial for an evil being to have either the inclination or power to perform.

The court being thus divided in their opinions with regard to the character of Jesus, they asked the man himself what he thought of the person who had conferred on him the blessing of sight. To which he plainly and boldly answered, "He is a prophet." But the Jews, wanting to prove the whole a cheat, started another objection, namely, that this person was not born blind, though all his neighbors had really testified to the truth of it. Accordingly, they called his parents, and asked them whether he was their son, if he had been born blind, and by what means he had obtained his sight. To which

they answered that he was truly their son, and had been born blind; but with regard to the manner in which he received his sight, and the person who had conferred it on him, they could give no information: their son was of age, and he should answer for himself. "These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was Christ he should be put out of the synagogue." John ix. 22.

The seventy disciples, having received their instructions, and the power of working miracles, from the Messiah, departed to execute their important commission in the cities and villages of Judea and Perea. And, after visiting the several places, publishing the glad tidings of salvation, and working many miracles in confirmation of their mission, they returned to their Master with great joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!"

From this appeal, it seems that they knew not the extent of their delegated power, and were pleasingly surprised to find the apostate spirits trembling at their command. To which their great Master replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." You will be no longer astonished that the devils are subject to the power I have given you, when I tell you their prince is not able to stand before me; and accordingly, when I first put on the vail of human nature, to destroy him and his works, I saw him, with the swiftness of the lightning's flash, fall from heaven: adding, in order to increase their joy, and prove that he had really cast Satan down from the seat of heaven, that he would increase their power. "Behold," says he, "I give unto

you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke x. 19.

Lest they should exult beyond measure in the honor thus conferred on them, which was merely temporary, our Lord adds, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Luke x. 20.

Nor could the blessed Jesus reflect on the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of the divine dispensations to mankind, without feeling extraordinary joy ; so that his beneficent heart overflowed with strains of gratitude ; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21.

When the seventy disciples had executed their commission, Jesus was met in the way by a certain lawyer, or scribe, who, being desirous of knowing whether the doctrines preached by Jesus were the same with those before delivered by Moses, asked him, What he should do to inherit eternal life ? It is really amazing that any mortal should ask a question like this with a view to tempt, not to be instructed. This was, however, the case ; but the blessed Jesus, though no stranger to the most secret thoughts of the heart, did not reply, as he had before done to the Pharisees, "Why temptest thou me, thou hypocrite ?" He turned the scribe's weapons against himself : What, says he, is written in the law, of which thou professest thyself a teacher ? "How readest thou ?" That law will teach thee what thou must do, and happy will it be for thee if thou compliest

with its precepts. The scribe answered, It is there written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke x. 27.

Our Lord then shows the strength and spirituality of the law: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Perform these commands, and thou hast fulfilled the duties of an Israelite; for on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Where is the man that can fulfil the law? The lawyer, who in all probability expected no such answer, being conscious of his defects, and consequently of the impossibility of obtaining eternal life on those conditions, was willing, as the sacred historian informs us, "to justify himself;" was willing to stifle the rising suggestions of his own conscience, and, at the same time, to make a show of his own devotion; and, in order to do this, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"—a question very likely to be asked by a bigoted Jew, whose narrow notions led him to despise all who were not of his own fold—all who were not the natural descendants of his father Abraham.

To remove their obstinate attachment to their own principles, open their hearts to a more generous and noble way of thinking, and show them the only foundation of true love, and the extensive relation they and all mankind stand in to each other, our Saviour delivered the following most beautiful and instructive parable:

A certain person, in his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho,* had the misfortune to fall into the hands of

* The city of Jericho lay in the deep valley of the Jordan, eighteen

robbers, who, not content with taking his money, stripped him of his raiment, beat him in a deplorable manner, and left him for dead. While he continued in this miserable condition, utterly incapable of assisting himself, a certain priest happened to travel the same road, "and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." So little compassion had these ministers of religion for a brother in the most deplorable circumstances of distress, that they continued their journey, without offering to assist so miserable an object, notwithstanding their sacred characters obliged them to perform, on every occasion, the tender offices of charity and compassion. It was a brother, a descendant of Abraham, in distress, and therefore, these hypocrites could offer no reasons to palliate their inhumanity. Their stony hearts could behold the affecting object of an unfortunate Israelite, lying on the road naked and cruelly wounded, without being the least affected with his distress.

miles northeast from Jerusalem. Its climate is tropical, and hence it was called "the city of palm trees." Between it and the river lay "the plain of Jericho," seven miles wide, and anciently very fruitful. Behind it, to the north and west, rose up a chain of steep and lofty hills, one of which, *Quarantana*, is from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred feet high, and takes its name from being supposed to be the scene of our Lord's forty days' fast and temptation.

The road from Jericho to Jerusalem is singularly wild, steep, and toilsome, as it ascends about three thousand feet in eighteen miles; and winds among desolate hills and deep ravines, volcanic rocks, narrow defiles, and gloomy caverns. These places have been, in ancient as well as in modern times, the haunts of robbers; so that few venture to traverse the road except in caravans, or with a military guard. This fact gives a singular force to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Though these teachers of religion were hypocrites, and wholly destitute of grace and charity, compassion glowed in the heart of a Samaritan, who, coming to the spot where this helpless object lay, ran to him; and though he found him to be a person of a different nation, and one who professed a religion opposite to his own, yet the hatred which had been instilled into his mind from his earliest years, and every objection arising from the animosity subsisting between the Jews and Samaritans, were immediately silenced by the tender sensations of pity awakened by the sight of such complicated distress: his bowels yearned toward the miserable object; though a Jew, he flew to him, and assisted him in the most tender manner.*

It was the custom in these Eastern countries for travellers to carry their provision with them; so that this compassionate Samaritan was enabled, though in the desert, to give the wounded man a little wine to recruit his spirits. He also bound up his wounds, pouring into them wine and oil, placed him on his own beast, and walked himself on foot to support him. In this manner he conducted him to an inn, took care of him during the night, and in the morning, when business called him to pursue his journey, recommended him to the care of the host, left what money he could spare, and desired that nothing might be denied him; for whatever was expended he would repay at his return.

Having finished the parable, Jesus turned himself to

* If we bear in mind that our Lord, only a short time before, had been very ill treated in a Samaritan village, because his face was set toward Jerusalem, we cannot fail to admire the kindness to that despised people which breathes through this parable, and has made the history of the "Good Samaritan" immortal.

the lawyer, and asked him, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor to him that fell among thieves?" The lawyer, struck with the truth and evidence of the case, replied, without the least hesitation, "He that showed mercy unto him." Upon which Jesus replied, "Go, and do thou likewise." Perform all the good offices in thy power, extend thy kindness to every one who stands in need of thy assistance, whether he be an Israelite, a heathen, or a Samaritan. Consider every man as thy neighbor in respect to works of charity, and make no inquiry with regard to his country or religion, but with regard to his circumstances.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUMBLE JESUS RESIDES WITH MARTHA AND MARY, TWO OBSCURE WOMEN OF BETHANY—IMPROVES A CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH OCCURRED AT THE FEAST OF DEDICATION—PRESCRIBES A MODE OF PRAYER TO HIS DISCIPLES AND FUTURE FOLLOWERS—REVISITS SOME OF THE PHARISAICAL TRIBE.

THE Feast of Dedication* approaching, Jesus turned his course toward Jerusalem, and in the evening came

* Besides the three annual religious festivals—the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles—established by divine authority at the beginning of their national existence, the Jews observed two others of later origin, in commemoration of two great events in their national history. These were the feasts of PURIM (or Lots), which dates from the year of their deliverance from the deadly plots of Haman (Esther ix. 17-32); and the Feast of Dedication, which dates from the cleansing and restoration of

to the house of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, at Bethany.* Martha was desirous of expressing her regard for the divine guest by providing for him and his disciples the best entertainment in her power. But her sister, who was of a more contemplative disposition, sat at the feet of Jesus, listening with the utmost attention to his doctrine; for the great Redeemer of mankind never omitted any opportunity of declaring the gracious offers of the Almighty and his unspeakable love for the children of men. Martha, being greatly fatigued with the burden of the service, complained to Jesus of the little care Mary took to assist her. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." Luke x. 40.

But Martha's officiousness incurred our Lord's reproof, who commended Mary for her attentive application to his doctrine: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."† Luke x. 41.

the Temple, after its three years of pollution by Antiochus Epiphanes, B. C. 164.

The Feast of Purim was celebrated in March, the Feast of Dedication in December, of our reckoning. The former was held for two days only; the latter for eight. The celebration of these feasts, though not obligatory, like those of divine institution, drew together vast crowds of the people to the Temple at Jerusalem, and furnished a fitting occasion for the Redeemer to instruct them in the great truths of salvation.

* Bethany was a small village about two miles from Jerusalem, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, on the road to Jericho.

Nothing in this passage apprises us that this was the Saviour's first visit to this interesting family, as is generally supposed. On the contrary, the language of the evangelist John indicates a friendship of long standing. John xi. 5.

† Both Martha and Mary appear to have been women of sincere piety;

When Jesus repaired to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Dedication, he was informed that the beggar he had restored to sight had been, by the Council, cast out of the synagogue.* This information excited the pity of the Son of God; and he resolved to make him full amends for the injury he had suffered. It was not long before he met the suffering person, and said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." John ix. 35.

We have hinted before that the beggar was thoroughly convinced the person who opened his eyes was a messenger from heaven. It is therefore no wonder that, as soon as he knew Jesus was the person who had performed so great a work, he readily believed him to be the Son of God.

Our Saviour, having thus given the poor man ample

but in this case our Saviour's reproof is too emphatic to leave a doubt of his displeasure at her anxious preparations for his entertainment. In comparison with her sister she was worldly-minded. Jesus would have been far better pleased with a simple meal, and more elevated spiritual tastes in her soul. This is the very point of the passage, and it is of every-day application. "The good part" here, is increase of piety by closer communion with Christ, and this cannot be had unless we redeem the time from worldly cares.

* The cure of this blind man was in October, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It seems a long time to suppose that Jesus did not make himself known to him until the Feast of Dedication, three months after. We rather incline to believe that these events and discourses belong to the day of the cure; and this seems to be the opinion of the best critics, as Olshausen and others. The miraculous escape of Jesus, and the more marvellous cure of the man born blind, diverted for the time the outbreak of fury that would have taken the life of the Redeemer

proof of his Messiahship, directed his discourse to the people and said unto them, "For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." John ix. 39. The meaning of our Saviour, though he alluded to the blind man, was spiritual. He did not intend to represent the design of his coming, but the effect it would have on the minds of men; as it would demonstrate what character and disposition every person possessed. The humble, the docile, and the honest, though they were immersed in the night of darkness with regard to religion and the knowledge of the Scriptures, should be enlightened by his coming, as the blind man had enjoyed the invaluable gift of sight from his hands; but those who were wise, learned, and enlightened in their own opinion, should appear in their true character, absolutely ignorant, foolish, and blind.

The Pharisees who happened to be present when he spake these words to the people, imagined that he intended to throw a reflection on their sect, which the common people, from their skill in the law, held in great veneration. Accordingly, they asked him, with disdain, "Are we blind also?" Dost thou place us, who are teachers, and have taken such pains to acquire the knowledge of the Scriptures, on a level with the vulgar? To which Jesus answered, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." If ye had not enjoyed the faculties and opportunities of discerning the proofs of my mission, you might have been considered as blind, but as ye are superior to the vulgar in point of learning, and at the same time, your hearts averse from acknowledging the

truth, your enlightened understanding will only aggravate your guilt.

Having condemned the obstinacy and prejudice of the sect in rejecting the most evident tokens of the divinity of his mission, he continued the reproof, by describing the character of a true and false teacher. It was our Lord's custom always to allude to objects before him; and, being now in the outer courts of the temple, near the sheep, which were there exposed to sale for sacrifice, he compared the teachers among the Jews to shepherds, and the people to sheep—a metaphor often used by the old prophets. He considered two kinds of bad shepherds, or teachers—the one, who, instead of entering in by the door to lead the flocks to the richest pastures, entered some other way, with an intention only to kill, to steal, and to destroy; the other, who, though they entered by the door to feed their flocks, with the dispositions of hirelings, yet when the wolf appeared they deserted the sheep, having no love for any but themselves. By the former he plainly alluded to the Pharisees, who had cast the man born blind out of the synagogue for no other reason than because he would not act contrary to the dictates of his conscience and agree with them in declaring Jesus to be an impostor.* But, though they had cast him out of their church, Christ received him into his, which is the true church,

* There were many synagogues in Jerusalem (forty, it is said), but they were all under the general care and government of the Sanhedrin. Hence, exclusion from one implied exclusion from all, as they were subject to a general law throughout Palestine, if not beyond its boundaries. When Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus as a persecutor, he took letters from the high priests at Jerusalem, though Damascus was beyond the limits of Palestine.

the spiritual enclosure, where the sheep go in and out and find pasture.

To illustrate the allusion, it should be observed that the sheep which were brought to be sold were enclosed in little folds, within the outer court of the temple; so that the shepherd himself could not enter till the porter had opened the door. And from this circumstance the following parabolical discourse may be easily understood: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." John x. 1. Believe me, that whosoever, in any age of the church, assumed the office of a teacher, without a commission from me, was a thief and a robber; and in the present age he is no better who assumes that office without my commission, and particularly without believing on me. "But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice." John x. 2-4.

The doctrine here inculcated is, that good men are obedient to the instructions of true and faithful teachers, who, in every case, show them their duty with the greatest plainness, not concealing it because it may be disagreeable to their inclinations.

The Feast of Dedication being now over, Jesus departed from Jerusalem, and retired into the parts of Perea beyond Jordan.* Here his ministry was attended

* Perea was that large district east of the river Jordan, which was origi-

with great success; for the inhabitants of the country, remembering what had been told them by John the Baptist concerning Jesus, and being sensible that the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour were fully equal to what the Baptist had foretold, firmly believed him to be the Messiah.

According to this supposition, which seems to be the most agreeable to reason, the inhabitants of these countries enjoyed the doctrines and miracles of the Son of God for a very considerable time. But, however this may be, the evangelist tells us that while he was executing his ministry beyond Jordan he happened to pray publicly, with such fervency that one of his disciples, who was exceedingly affected both with the matter and manner of his address, begged he would teach them to pray. "And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins; for we also forgive

nally allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. For three hundred years before the Assyrian captivity, it was extended by conquest eastward to the very banks of the Euphrates—an extreme breadth of more than a hundred miles. 1 Chron. v. 10-22.

The boundaries of Perea in our Saviour's time are not easily defined, as the vast region "beyond Jordan," as it was termed, was broken up into several divisions, under different jurisdictions, from Mount Hermon on the north to Mount Seir on the south. Perea itself was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea.

every one that is indebted to us : and lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil." Luke xi. 1-4.

Soon after our blessed Saviour cast out a devil, when some who were present ascribed the miracle to Beelzebub. "And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake ; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Luke xi. 14, 15. However strange this argument may seem, and however weak and absurd it must appear to impartial judges, yet it had a considerable effect on illiterate persons, especially on those whose prejudices and interests it favored. The Pharisees pretended that as Jesus had all along been at great pains to oppose the traditions which most of the teachers of that age considered as the essentials of religion and the principal branches of piety, he must be a very wicked person.

They also insisted that a false prophet had the power of working signs and wonders, and thence that our Saviour performed all his miracles by the assistance of evil spirits, with an intention to turn the people from the worship of the true God.

Another pretended reason for ascribing his miracles to evil spirits was that the demons themselves, when they departed out of the persons possessed, honored him with the title of Messiah.

Their arguments, though evidently founded on falsehood, contributed largely to the infidelity of the Jews ; and however we may be surprised that such weak reasons should have any effect, considering what multitudes were witnesses of the many miracles the blessed Jesus

performed on the sick of all sorts; on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the lame; on paralytics, lunatics, demoniacs, and other miserable objects—nay, on the dead, whom he raised again to life, on the winds and the seas, in a word, on every part of nature—yet experience hath abundantly convinced us that, notwithstanding all these evidences, their own superstitious opinions fixed that headstrong people in their infidelity.

CHAPTER XXI.

EXPLANATION OF THE ORIGIN AND OPINIONS OF THE DIFFERENT SECTS AMONG THE JEWS—OUR LORD TEACHES THE MULTITUDE BY PLAIN DISCOURSE, AND ALSO BY PARABLES.

HAVING undertaken to write the history of the life of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we cannot omit a distinct account of the different sects of the Jews, a people with whom he was most intimately concerned, both as a necessary elucidation of many circumstances, as well as an important verification of many things foretold concerning the Messiah.

Josephus reckons four principal sects among the Jews—namely, the Pharisees, the Sadducees (called also Herodians), the Essenes, and the Galileans. The evangelists, however, mention only two, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The rise of the Pharisees is unknown. They claim, indeed, the celebrated Hillel for their founder. He is

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by some supposed to have lived during the pontificate of Jonathan, about a hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ; but others, with more reason, suppose that he was cotemporary with the famous Someas, who lived about the time of Herod, long before whom the sect of the Pharisees was in high repute. It is, therefore, probable that they claim Hillel rather as an ornament than as the author of the sect.

One of the most famous tenets of the Pharisees was that of an Oral Tradition handed down from Moses, and to which they attributed the same divine authority as to the sacred books. This being strenuously opposed by the Sadducees and Samaritans, rendered these equally detested by them. But none more incurred their hatred than the blessed Jesus, who embraced every occasion of reproving them for the unjustifiable preference they gave this pretended tradition to the written word of God, and also for condemning those as apostates worthy of death, who did not pay the same or even a greater regard to the former than to the latter.

Another tenet they embraced, in opposition to the Sadducees, was that of the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and future rewards. But, with regard to the last, they excluded all who were notoriously wicked from having any share in the happiness of eternity; supposing that, as soon as death had put a period to their lives, their souls were conveyed into everlasting punishment.

A third tenet was, that all things were subject to fate, or, as some expressed it, to the heavens. It is not easy to conceive what they meant by this: Josephus, indeed, will have it that they designed to reconcile the fatalism

of the Essenes with the free will of the Sadducees, but a certain learned prelate seems to have proved that they attribute all to fate, or to that chain of causes to which the Creator has subjected all things from the beginning; among which the influence of the heavenly bodies was considered the principal. This tenet of the Pharisees was, therefore, a source of dislike to the doctrines delivered by the blessed Jesus, as these affirm that men are the authors of their own unbelief, disobedience, and obstinacy, and consequently answerable for that, and all the train of evils these vices draw after them.

But the most distinguished character of the Pharisees, and that which rendered them more obnoxious to the just censures of our blessed Saviour, was their supererogatory attachment to the ceremonial law; their frequent washings, fastings, and prayings; their giving alms publicly, seeking for proselytes, scrupulous tithings, affected gravity of dress, gesture, and mortified looks; their building the tombs of the prophets, to tell the world that they were more righteous than their ancestors, who murdered them, though they were themselves plotting the death of One greater than all the prophets; their over-scrupulous observance of the Sabbath, to the exclusion of the works of the greatest charity, and many others of the like nature; while they were wholly negligent of the moral and eternal law of mercy and justice, of charity and humility, and the like indispensable virtues. The very best of them contented themselves with abstaining from the actual commission of any enormous act, while they indulged themselves in the most wicked thoughts and desires. Nay, some, more hardened in their vices, made no scruple not only of covet-

ing, but destroying poor widows' houses, of committing the vilest oppressions, injustice, and cruelties, and of encouraging these enormities in their followers, under the specious cloak of religion and sanctity. Well, therefore, might the great Redeemer of mankind compare them to whited sepulchres, beautiful indeed without, but within full of rottenness and corruption.

The last erroneous opinion we shall mention of the Pharisees (common, indeed, to all the other sects, but more exactly conformable to their haughty, rapacious, and cruel temper), was their expectation of a powerful, conquering Messiah, who was to bring the whole world under the Jewish yoke; so that there was scarce an inhabitant of Jerusalem, however mean, that did not expect to be made a governor of some opulent province under that wonderful prince. How unlikely was it, then, that the preaching of the meek and humble Jesus, whose doctrine breathed nothing but humility, peace, sincerity, and contempt of the world, and universal love and beneficence, should ever be relished by that proud, that covetous, that hypocritical sect, or even by the rest of the people, while these their teachers so strenuously opposed it.

The sect of the Sadducees is said to have been founded by Saddoc, a disciple of Antigonus of Socho. Their chief tenet was, that our serving God ought to be free either from fear of punishment or from hope of reward.*

* A worldly, skeptical spirit never lacks plausible pretexts. One of these was found in opposition to the superstitions of the Pharisees, especially those engendered by their Oral Tradition. This opposition, in itself essentially just, was altogether perverted, by the Sadducees, into a

They added that God was the only immaterial being; in consequence of which they denied the existence of angels, or any spiritual substances, except the Almighty himself. It is therefore no wonder that the Sadducees took every opportunity of opposing and ridiculing the doctrine of the resurrection.

Another of their tenets, equally opposite to the Pharisees and to the doctrine of Christ, was, that man was constituted absolute master of all his actions, and stood in no need of any assistance to choose or act: for this reason, they were always very severe in their sentences when they sat as judges. They rejected all the pretended oral traditions of the Pharisees, admitting only the texts of the sacred books, and preferred those of Moses to all the rest of the inspired writings. They are charged with some other erroneous tenets by Josephus and the Talmudists; but those already mentioned are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. The Christian doctrine of a future life, universal judgment, eternal rewards and punishments, to men whom a contrary doctrine had long soothed into luxury and an overgrown fondness for temporal happiness, which they considered as the only reward for their obedience, must of necessity appear strange and frightful, and, as such, could not

rejection of the most vital truths. Another pretext was found in the disinterested nature of true virtue, which justly demands our obedience to God and love to man on the primary ground of moral obligation. But this was perversely construed by the Sadducees, as if virtue could admit no consideration of consequences, no support under trial from a divine promise of reward, or from dread of divine punishment. That the descendants of Abraham should fall into such errors, and yet profess to believe the Scriptures, is a clear proof that the spirit of faith was utterly wanting. Indeed it is remarkable, that while some of the Pharisees embraced Christianity, we do not read of the conversion of a single Sadducee

fail of meeting with the strongest opposition from them ; especially if we add, what Josephus observes, that they were, in general, men of the greatest quality and opulence, and, consequently, too apt to prefer the pleasures and grandeur of this life to those of another.*

The sect of Galileans, or Gaulonites,† so called from Judas the Galilean or Gaulonite, appeared soon after the banishment of Archelaus, when his territories were made a Roman province and the government given to Coponius. For, some of the Jews considering this as an attempt to reduce them to slavery, Judas took advantage of their discontent ; and Augustus furnished them with a plausible pretence for an insurrection, by issuing about this time a second edict for surveying the whole province of Syria, and laying on it a proportional tax.‡ Judas, therefore, who was a man of uncommon ambition, took occasion from this incident to display all his eloquence, in order to convince the Jews that such a submission was nothing less than base idolatry, and placing men on a level with the God of Jacob, who was the only Lord and Sovereign that could challenge their obedience and subjection.§ The party which he drew after him became so considerable that they threw every

* See note page 48.

† Gaulonitis was a district of Palestine north of the Sea of Galilee, and east of the Jordan before it enters the sea. It belonged to the jurisdiction of Philip the Tetrarch in the time of Christ, but its exact boundaries cannot be defined. In a loose sense, it might be said to belong to Galilee, and the name of this fanatical sect shows that such was the popular acceptance. Acts v. 37.

‡ See note page 31.

§ The close connection between religious fanaticism and rebellion is strongly illustrated in the history of this pernicious sect.

thing into confusion, laid the foundation for those frightful consequences that ensued, and which did not end but with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Essenes, though not mentioned by the evangelists, made a very considerable sect among the Jews, and are highly celebrated by Josephus, Philo, Pliny, and several Christian writers, both ancient and modern.* It is impossible to trace their origin, or even the etymology of their name. This, however, is certain—that they were settled in Judea in the time of Jonathan, the brother and successor of Judas Maccabeus, about a hundred and fifty years before Christ.

The Essenes distinguished themselves by their rules and manner of life, into the laborious and contemplative. The former divided their time between prayer and labor, such as the exercise of some handicraft, or the cultivation of some particular spot of ground, where they planted and sowed such roots, grain, etc., as served for their food; and the latter, between prayer, contemplation, and study. In this last they confined

* Even Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, goes so far as to claim them as a sect of Christians. But he lived in an age when the general corruption of public manners made a life of ascetic seclusion for religious purposes appear saintly, without much regard to Christianity.

The truth is, the Essenes were a small body of recluses, who lived near the borders of the Dead Sea, almost totally estranged from society. They were a sect of Mystics, whose outward character was respectable, like that of the Shakers in modern times, but whose doctrines and spirit had no tincture of the Gospel of Christ. Instead of deriving their doctrines from the Scriptures, they made void the authority of the Scriptures by arbitrary and allegorical interpretations. Their importance is entirely overrated by the writers mentioned above, although we may hope that some of them, like Luther in his cell, did find in the Bible a light that led them to Jesus.

themselves to the sacred books and morality, without troubling themselves with any branch of philosophy. Both the contemplative and laborious had their synagogues, their stated hours for prayer, for reading, and expounding the sacred books. The latter was always performed by the elders, who were seated at the upper end of the synagogue, according to their seniority; while the younger, who were permitted to read the lessons, were placed at the lower. Their expositions were generally of the allegorical kind, in which they seem to have exceeded all their Jewish brethren. But they paid the greatest regard to the five books of Moses, and considered that lawgiver as the head of all the inspired penmen: they even condemned to immediate death whoever spoke disrespectfully either of him or his writings. Upon this account they studied, read, and expounded him more than all the rest, and seem to have drawn their religion chiefly from the Pentateuch. The doctrines and expositions of the elders were received with implicit faith, and in their practice they conformed with an entire submission to all their sect.

With respect to their faith, they believed in the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, like the Pharisees, but seem to have had no notion of the resurrection. They considered the souls of men as composed of a most subtle ether, which, immediately after their separation from the cage or prison, as they called it, were adjudged to a place of endless happiness or misery; that the good took their flight over the ocean, to some warm or delightful regions prepared for them, while the wicked were conveyed to some cold,

intemperate climate, where they were left to groan under an inexpressible weight of misery. They were likewise entirely opposed to the Sadducean doctrine of free-will, attributing all to an eternal fatality or chain of causes. They were averse to all kinds of oaths, affirming that a man's life ought to be such that he may be credited without them. The contemplative sort placed the excellency of their meditative life in raising their minds above the earth and placing their thoughts on heaven : when they had attained this degree of excellency, they acquired the character of prophets.

In their practice they excelled all the other sects in austerity. If we may credit Philo, it was a fundamental maxim with them, upon their entrance into the contemplative life, to renounce the world and to divide among their friends and relations their properties and estates. They never ate till after sunset, and the best of their food was coarse bread, a little salt, and a few stomach-herbs. Their clothing was made of coarse wool, plain, but white : they condemned all sorts of unctions and perfumes as luxurious and effeminate. Their beds were hard and their sleep short. Their heads, or superiors, were generally chosen according to seniority, unless there started up among the brotherhood some more conspicuous for learning, piety, or prophetic spirit *. Some of them, indeed, were so contemplative that they

* The Apostle Paul is, by some, supposed to refer to this Jewish sect in Col. ii. 23. This seems, on the whole, doubtful ; yet something of their spirit seems to have made its appearance in Paul's time at Colosse (A. D. 63), and penetrated into the Christian church. Perhaps some of the Jewish Essenes from Egypt had come to Colosse, and under the name of Christians, broached their peculiar opinions in opposition to the supreme authority of Christ. The whole chapter is important in this view.

never stirred out of their cell, or even looked out of their window, during the whole week, spending their time in reading the sacred books and writing comments upon them. On the Sabbath day they repaired to their synagogues early in the morning, and continued there the whole day in prayer, singing psalms, or expounding the sacred books.*

Having endeavored to explain the origin and tenets of the several sects among the Jews, we now return to the history of our blessed Saviour, whom we left preaching in the country beyond Jordan, where he was surrounded by an innumerable multitude of people.

In the audience of this vast assembly, he gave his disciples, in general, a charge to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees—namely, hypocrisy—because all their actions would be brought to light either in this world or in that which is to come; and he therefore exhorted them to be very careful never to do any thing which could not bear the light, but to let the whole of their behavior be honest, just, and good. “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear, in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.” Luke xii. 1–3.

This argument against hypocrisy he used as a reason for their acquiring another quality, which would much

* These four sects represent the Traditionists, the Reactionists, the Fanatics, and the Mystics of all nations and ages. Christianity stands against them all like a tower, four square.

better serve all the ends they could propose—namely, an undaunted resolution in the performance of their duty, founded on a firm confidence in God, who would bring to light the most secret word and thought, publicly condemn the wicked, and justify his faithful servants and children.

Fear not, said he, the malice of the human race ; it can extend no farther than the destruction of the body ; your soul may bid defiance to their impotent rage. But dread the displeasure of that Almighty Being, who, after he has destroyed the body, is able to confine the soul in eternal torments. Remember all things are in his power, and that nothing happens without his permission : he provides for the meanest of his creatures, and surely you may think yourselves under his protection, who numbers the very hairs of your head ; nor can your enemies touch one of them without his permission. Luke xii. 4, etc.

Our Lord, to animate his followers to perseverance, admonishes them to look forward unto the general judgment when he would acknowledge them as his servants, provided they acknowledged him in this world as their Master, and cheerfully and constantly obeyed his commands. But if they were ashamed of him, and his doctrine, before the sons of men, he would disown them before the celestial host. And that those who reviled the Spirit, by whom they performed their miracles, should be punished by the Almighty, in proportion to the malignity of their crime, which is greater than that of reviling the Son of God himself ; because it will be impossible for them to repent.

While our blessed Saviour was delivering these

exhortations to his disciples, a certain person among the multitude begged him that he would interpose his authority with his brother, in order to oblige him to divide their paternal inheritance between them : but as this decision properly belonged to the magistrates, our blessed Saviour, who came into the world to redeem the souls of mankind, and to purchase for them an eternal, not a temporal inheritance, declined the office. He, however, embraced the opportunity of giving his hearers the most solemn caution against covetousness; declaring, that neither the length nor happiness of human life had any dependence on the largeness of possessions. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke xii. 15.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully : And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater : and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 16, etc.

"So is he," added our blessed Saviour, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Thus shall he be taken away from all his soul desireth ; thus shall he be torn from all his temporal prospects and pleasures. None of his beloved enjoyments shall

follow him; naked as he came shall he depart out of the world, nor shall all his riches be able to procure him the least comfort or respite in these scenes of terror.

Having spoken this parable, our Lord proceeded to caution his disciples against anxious cares for the things of this world, from a consideration that the care of God's providence extends to every part of the creation. He added, that as God had destined them to everlasting happiness in a future life, he would surely provide for them all the necessaries of the present. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke xii. 33, 34.

Having thus recommended to them the disengagement of their affections from the things of this world, he exhorted them to labor after improvement in grace. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke xii. 35, 36.

"There were present, at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices;"* thinking that Providence, for some extraordinary crime, had suffered these Galileans to be murdered at the altar.

But our Lord showed them the error of their opinion and inference concerning this point, it being no indication that these Galileans were greater sinners than their countrymen because they had suffered so severe a

* Josephus mentions this fact with some detail, but gives us no precise note of time.

calamity, and at the same time exhorted them to improve such instances of calamity, as incitements to their own repentance; assuring them, that if they neglected so salutary a work, they should all likewise perish. "And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye, that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 2, etc.

He illustrated this doctrine, by putting them in mind of the eighteen persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell;* showing them, by this instance, the folly of interpreting the dispensations of Providence in that manner; for though this calamity seemed to flow immediately from the hand of God, yet, in all probability, it had involved people who were remarkable for their piety and goodness. "Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them: think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 4, 5.

To rouse them from their indolence, and to induce them to seek the aid of God's grace and spirit, he added the parable of the fig-tree, which the master of the vineyard, after finding it three years barren, ordered to be destroyed: but was spared one year longer at the earnest solicitation of the gardener. Luke xiii. 6, etc.

During Jesus' abode in the country of Perea, he

* The tower of Siloam is not mentioned elsewhere, but it doubtless was erected near the fountain or pool of Siloam. It was probably designed to guard these important sources of water supply from falling into the hands of an enemy. See note page 235

observed, while he was preaching in one of the synagogues, on the Sabbath day, a woman who, during the space of eighteen years, had been unable to stand upright. A daughter of Israel laboring under so terrible a disorder, could not fail of attracting the compassion of the Son of God.

He beheld this affecting object: he pitied her deplorable condition, he removed her complaint. She who came into the synagogue bowed down with an incurable infirmity, was, by the all-powerful word of the Son of God, restored to her natural health, and returned to her house upright, and full of vigor.

Such a display of divine power and goodness, instead of exciting the gratitude, so highly offended the master of the synagogue, that he openly testified his displeasure, and reproved the people as Sabbath-breakers, because they came on that day to be healed. "There are six days," said this surly ruler to the people, "in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Luke xiii. 14.

But our blessed Saviour soon silenced this hypocritical Pharisee, by showing that he had not deviated from their own avowed practice. They made no scruple of loosing their cattle, and leading them to water on the Sabbath day, because the mercy of the action sufficiently justified them for performing it. And surely his action of loosing, by a single word, a woman, a rational creature, a daughter of Abraham, that had been bound by an incurable distemper during the tedious interval of eighteen years, was abundantly justified; nor could this bigoted ruler have thought otherwise, had not his reason been blinded by his superstition. "And when he had

said these things all his adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." Luke xiii. 15, etc.

From this instance we may form some idea of the pernicious effects of superstition, which is capable of extinguishing reason, banishing compassion, and of eradicating the most essential principles and feelings of the human breast.

Our Lord, having reproved the superstition of the ruler of the synagogue, and observing the acclamations of the people, then proceeded to demonstrate the reason and truth which so effectually supported his kingdom. For he repeated the parables of the grain of mustard seed and of the leaven, to show the efficacious operations of the gospel upon the minds of the children of men, and its rapid progress through the world, notwithstanding all the opposition of its most inveterate enemies.

The great Redeemer having now planted the seeds of the gospel in the country of Perea, crossed the Jordan, and travelled by slow journeys toward Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in every village, and declaring the glad tidings of salvation to all the inhabitants of those countries.

While he was thus laboring for the salvation of mankind, one of the persons who accompanied him asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Jesus told him that a small number only of the Jews would be saved; exhorting him to embrace the offers of mercy before it was too late; for that many, after the period of their trial was concluded, and their state finally and irreversibly determined, should earnestly desire these benevolent offers, but should be denied their request.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know ye not, whence ye are.” Luke xiii. 24, 25.

Immediately after, certain of the Pharisees came to him, and told him that unless he departed thence, Herod would destroy him. But this concern for his safety was altogether feigned, and their real design no other than to intimidate him; hoping by that means to induce him to leave the country, and retire into Judea, where they did not doubt but the chief priests would find some method of putting him to death. Perhaps Herod himself was privy to this message, and desired that Jesus should leave his territories, though the agonies he had suffered on account of John the Baptist hindered him from making use of force. That this was really the case seems evident from the answer our blessed Saviour made to the Pharisees. “Go ye,” said he to these hypocritical Israelites, “and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* Nevertheless, I must

* No commentator that we have seen has noticed that the days here spoken of by our Saviour, as necessary to finish his work in Perea, correspond precisely to the days that Jesus remained there after he had been apprised of the sickness of his friend Lazarus in Bethany. John xi. 6, 7. Can there be a doubt that the time is the same, though mentioned in different connections by the two evangelists, Luke and John? As Jesus would not yield his sense of duty and abandon his appointed work in Perea to any threats of Herod's sinister designs, so neither would he give it up to save the life of his friend or to relieve the anxiety of his sorrow-

walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Luke xiii. 32, 33.

Having given this answer to the Pharisees, he reflected on the treatment the prophets had received from the inhabitants of Jerusalem; pathetically lamented their obstinacy, and the terrible desolation that would in a short time overtake them. "Oh! Jerusalem, Jesusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Luke xiii. 34, 35.

ing sisters. Designing to raise Lazarus from the dead under the most trying circumstances, he did not even begin his journey to Bethany until he knew his death had taken place, and even then travelled so slowly that he did not arrive at Bethany until four days after the burial. Not that he loitered idly on the way, but that everywhere, as he passed from place to place, he was beset by the multitudes, who sought his presence for instruction or healing. If he went up as late as March, A. D. 33—at the Feast of Purim—these moving masses would accumulate on their way to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BLESSED JESUS ACCEPTS THE PHARISEE'S INVITATION—
DELIVERS DIVERS PARABLES, REPRESENTING THE REQUISITES FOR ADMITTANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD—THE CARE OF THE REDEEMER FOR EVERY ONE OF HIS PEOPLE—THE RECEPTION OF A PENITENT SINNER, AND THE PUNISHMENT OF MISUSING THE BENEFITS OF THE GOSPEL.

OUR Saviour was invited by one of the Pharisees to his house. Though he knew that this invitation arose not from a generous motive, yet, as he never shunned any opportunity of doing good, even to his most implacable enemies, he accepted it.

At his entering the Pharisee's house, they placed before him a man that had a dropsy, doubtless with an intention to accuse him for healing on the Sabbath day—being persuaded that he would work a miracle in favor of so melancholy an object. Jesus, who knew the secret thoughts of their hearts, asked the lawyers* and Pharisees whether it was “lawful to heal on the Sabbath day.” But they refusing to give any answer to the question, Jesus laid his hand on the diseased person, and immediately his complexion returned, his body was reduced to its ordinary dimensions, and his former health and strength renewed in an instant.

So surprising a miracle might surely have convinced these Pharisees that the author must have been endued with power from on high; but, instead of being per-

* The lawyers were the same as the Scribes, *i. e.*, teachers of the Jewish law.

suaded that he was a person sent from God, who labored only for the benefit of the children of men, they were contriving how they might turn this miracle to his disadvantage. Our Lord, however, soon disconcerted their projects, by proving that, according to their own avowed practice, he had done nothing but what was truly lawful. "Which of you," said he, "shall have an ass or an oxen fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" If a calamity happens to one of your beasts, you make no scruple of assisting it on the Sabbath, though the action may be attended with considerable labor; and surely I may relieve a descendant of Abraham, when nothing more is requisite than touching him with my hand. This argument was conclusive, and so plain that the grossest stupidity must feel its force, and the most virulent malice could not contradict it.

As the entertainment approached, our blessed Lord had an opportunity of observing the pride of the Pharisees, and remarking what an anxiety each of them expressed to obtain the most honorable place at the table. Nor did he let their ridiculous behaviour pass without a proper animadversion—in which he observed that pride generally exposed a person to many affronts, and that humility is the surest method of gaining respect. "When thou art bidden," said he, "of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt

thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke xiv. 8, etc.

Having thus addressed the guests in general, he turned to the master of the house, and said unto him, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." Luke xiv. 12, 13. Be very careful not to limit thy hospitality to the rich, but let the poor also partake of thy bounty. "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke xiv. 14.

One of the Pharisees, enraptured with the delightful prospect of the happiness good men enjoyed in the heavenly Canaan, cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Blessed is he who, being admitted into the happy regions of Paradise, shall enjoy the conversation of the inhabitants of those heavenly countries; as those spiritual repasts must regale and invigorate his mind beyond expression. In answer to which our blessed Saviour delivered the parable of the Marriage Supper, representing, by the invitation of the guests, the doctrine of the gospel, and the success those beneficent invitations to the great feast of heaven should meet with among the Jews; foretelling that, though it was attended with every inviting circumstance, they would disdainfully reject it, and prefer the pleasures of a temporal existence to those of an eternal state;

while the Gentiles, with the greatest cheerfulness, would embrace the beneficent offer, and thereby be prepared to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the happy mansions of the kingdom of heaven. But, as this parable was afterward spoken by our blessed Saviour in the temple, we shall defer our observations on it till we come to the history where it was again delivered.

When Jesus departed from the Pharisee's house, great multitudes of people thronged around him to hear his doctrine, but mistook the true intention of it, expecting he was going to establish the Messiah's throne in Jerusalem and render all the nations of the world tributary to his power. The benevolent Jesus therefore took this opportunity to undeceive them, and to declare, in the plainest terms, that his kingdom was not of this world, and, consequently, that those who expected, by following him, to obtain temporal advantages, would find themselves wretchedly mistaken, as, on the contrary, his disciples must expect to be persecuted from city to city, and hated of all men for his name's sake; though it was requisite for those who would be his true followers to prefer his service to the richest grandeur and pleasure of the world, and to show, by their conduct, that they had much less respect and value for the dearest objects of their affection than for him. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26.

And in order to induce them to weigh this doctrine attentively in their minds, he elucidated it with two

opposite cases—that of an unthinking builder and of a rash warrior. The former was obliged to leave the structure unfinished, because he had foolishly begun the building before he had computed the cost; and the latter, reduced to the dilemma of being ingloriously defeated, or meanly suing for peace previous to the battle, having rashly declared war before he had considered the strength of his own and his enemy's army. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you," added the blessed Jesus, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 33.

The publicans and sinners, roused by the alarming doctrine of our Lord, listened to it attentively. This opportunity was readily embraced by the great Redeemer of mankind, who not only condescended to preach to them the happy tidings of eternal life, but even accompanied them to their own houses, that, if possible, the seeds of the gospel might take root in their hearts. But this condescension of the meek and humble Jesus was considered, by the haughty Pharisees, as an action too mean for the character of a prophet. They murmured, and were highly displeased at a condescension which ought to have given the greatest joy. But Jesus soon showed them their mistake, by repeating to them the parables of the Lost Sheep and Piece of Money; intimating thereby the great care all prophets and pastors ought to take of those committed to their care, and the obligation they lie under of searching diligently for every wandering sinner, whose conversion is a grateful offering to the Almighty. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke xv. 10.

To illustrate this doctrine still further, and show to

the greatest sinner the willingness of God to receive him into his grace and favor, if convinced of his unworthy and lost condition in himself and imploring forgiveness through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the renewal of his heart by the efficacious influences of his spirit, he delivered the expressive parable of the Prodigal Son. Luke xv.

There are three expositions given of this instructive representation, each of which seems to have some place in the original design, for it should be observed, and carefully remembered, that the parables and doctrines of our Saviour are by no means to be confined absolutely to one single point of view, since they frequently have relation to different objects, and consequently prove the riches and depth of the manifold wisdom of God.*

* This general principle (called by the learned Tholuck the *comprehensive* principle of interpretation) is undoubtedly a sound one; but it requires great prudence in its use, or it will degenerate into vain imaginations, and fritter away the very substance of divine Revelation. Least of all, is it applicable to the study of the parables; which being in their nature veiled in a certain degree of obscurity, yet have but *one* proper meaning; and that one we are bound to take and *adhere to*, as the true teaching of Christ. The moment we permit ourselves to depart from this principle, we cut loose from the authority of Christ, and conscience is left free to float in the dazzling mists of human fancy till wrecked on the most fatal rocks.

This is not mere theory. The old Jewish rabbis had a saying, that "every sentence of Scripture contains a mountain of sense," and the result was what is called the *dynamic* principle of interpretation, *i. e.*, that every sentence has as many meanings as can be put upon it by the ingenuity of the expositor. Thence came that mass of "Jewish fables" which crowd the Talmuds, and mislead that blinded people to this day. Some of the early Christian writers fell into the same vortex of folly. Our author has given us two specimens of this treatment of the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son; which expositions, while possibly teaching **no** false doctrine, have not the slightest claim, on any just ground, to be

In this parable, for instance, the great and principal doctrine, intended to be particularly inculcated, is, that sinners, upon their repentance and faith, are gladly received into favor; or that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. There are, however, two other applications of this parable: the first is that of the greatest part of the ancients, who expounded it of Adam. He was made in the image of God, and endowed with many other excellent gifts, which he might have used happily, had he been content to stay in his Father's house; but, like this younger brother, who foolishly desired his portion of goods to himself, that he might be his own master and under no confinement or restriction, he was unwilling to remain under the obedience of the divine precept; he was desirous of having a free use of things in Paradise, and by the devil's instigation affected a wretched independency, which caused him to break the divine command, and eat of the forbidden tree, to obtain the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he lost for himself and his posterity the substance put at first into his possession; but his heavenly Father, on his and his posterity's return, hath provided such grace and compassion for them that they may be reinstated in their former place and favor. And the same grace not being granted to the higher order of intellectual beings, the fallen spirits, is the cause of their murmuring against

regarded as the meaning of Christ. He has the good sense to distinguish the real meaning, as fixed by the occasion and context; but is too ready to endorse the strained and unwarranted fancies of some of the ancient "fathers," so-called. What sort of fathers were they, who neither founded the Church, nor fed it on "the pure milk of the word"? 1 Pet. ii 1, 2; 2 Cor. ii, 17.

God and men, represented by the answer of the elder brother, in this parable.

Others, secondly, with a much greater show of probability, expound this parable of the two people the Jews and Gentiles, who have both one Father, even God; and while they both continued in their Father's house, the true church, they wanted for nothing: there was plenty of food for the soul, there was substance enough for them both. But the latter, represented by the younger brother, possessed of his share of knowledge, went into a strange country, left God, and spent his substance, the evidence and knowledge of the Almighty, fell into idolatry, and wasted all he had in riotous living—all his knowledge of God in the loose and absurd ceremonies of idolatry. Then, behold, a mighty famine arose in that land: the worship of the true God was banished the country. In this dreadful dearth and hunger, he joined himself to the devil, and worked all "uncleanness with greediness." But, finding nothing to satisfy his spiritual hunger, this prodigal, long estranged from his Father, reflecting on this spiritual famine and his own severe wants, humbly confessed his faults, returned to his offended Father, was readmitted into favor, and blessed with the privileges of the gospel. But the elder brother, the Jewish Church, daily employed in the field of legal ceremonies, and who had long groaned under the yoke of the law, seeing the Gentiles received into the covenant of the gospel, obtain the remission of sins and the hope of everlasting life, murmured against the benevolent acts of the Almighty. God, however, out of his great compassion, pleaded pathetically the cause with the elder brother, offered him all things,

upon supposition of his continuing in his obedience, and declared that he had delivered the nation from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law.

Thus the parable has a very clear and elegant exposition, the murmuring of the elder brother is explained to us without the least difficulty; and as the offence of receiving the Gentiles to pardon and peace, through Jesus Christ, was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews, it is natural to imagine that our Saviour intended to obviate and remove it by this excellent parable.*

It is, however, evident, both from the context and the occasion of delivering it, that the third interpretation is the first in design and importance. The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus. This gave occasion to a murmuring among the Pharisees; and, upon their murmuring, our Saviour delivered this and two other parables, to show that, if they would resemble God and the celestial host, they should, instead of murmuring, rejoice at seeing sinners willing to embrace the doctrines of the gospel, because there is joy, in the presence of God and his angels, "over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

The obstinacy and malicious temper of the Pharisees, who opposed every good doctrine, made a deep impression on the mind of the blessed Jesus: he did not, therefore, content himself barely with justifying his receiving sinners, in order to their being justified and

* The best that can be said of these two expositions is, that they are ingenious *applications* of the parable to illustrate other truths than the one so clearly and beautifully taught in it. What that is our author proceeds to show, and to that our attention should be confined if we would see its admirable pertinence to the occasion.

saved through him, but, in the presence of the Scribes and Pharisees, turned himself to his disciples, and delivered the parable of the Artful Steward, as an instance of the ingenuity shown by the children of this world in embracing every opportunity and advantage for improving their interests. "There was," said he, "a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." Luke xvi. 1, 2.

This reprimand of his lord, and the inward conviction of his own conscience that the accusation was just, induced him to reflect on his own ill management of his lord's affairs, and in what manner he should support himself when he should be discharged from his service. "What shall I do?" said he, "for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." Luke xvi. 3.

In this manner he deliberated with himself, and at last resolved on the following expedient, in order to make himself friends who would succor him in his distress: "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of my stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore." Luke xvi. 4, etc.

To illustrate this parable, we beg leave to observe that the riches and trade of the Jews, originally, consisted principally in the products of the earth: they were, if we may be allowed the expression, a nation of farmers and shepherds; so that their wealth, chiefly, arose from the produce of their flocks and herds and the fruits of the earth, their corn, their wine, and their oil.

Thus, the steward, to secure the friendship of his lord's tenants, bound them to him under a lasting obligation; and his master, when he heard of the proceedings of his steward, commended him, not because he acted honestly, but because he acted sagaciously: he commended the art and address he had shown in producing a future subsistence; he commended the prudence and ingenuity he had used with regard to his own interest, and to deliver him from future poverty and distress. "For the children of this world," added the blessed Jesus, "are in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are more prudent and careful, more anxious and circumspect, to secure their possessions in this world, than the children of light are to secure in the next an eternal inheritance. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Luke xvi. 9.

This advice of our Saviour is worthy our most serious attention; the best use we can make of our riches being to employ them in promoting the salvation of others. For, if we use our abilities and interests in turning sinners from the evil of their ways, if we spend our wealth in this excellent service, from pure motives and to the glory of God, we shall have the good-will of all the

heavenly beings, who will greatly rejoice at the conversion of sinners, and, with open arms, receive us into the mansions of felicity.

But this is not the whole application our Saviour made of this parable. He added, that if we made use of our riches in the manner he recommended, we should be received into those everlasting habitations, where all the friends of virtue and religion reside; because, by our fidelity in managing the small trust of temporal advantages committed to our care, we show ourselves worthy and capable of a much greater trust in heavenly employments.

And if, while ye are God's stewards and servants, ye desert your trust, and become slaves to the desire of riches, you can expect no other than to be called to a strict account of your stewardship; covetousness being as absolutely inconsistent with a true concern for the cause of Christ, as it is for a man to undertake at one and the same time to serve two masters of contrary dispositions, and opposite interests. "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Luke xvi. 13.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JESUS REBUKES THE INSOLENT DERISION OF THE PHARISEES—
DESCRIBES, BY A PARABLE, THE NATURE OF FUTURE RE-
WARDS AND PUNISHMENTS, AND ENFORCES THE DOCTRINE
OF MUTUAL FORBEARANCE.

THE doctrines delivered by our Lord, being so repugnant to the avaricious principles of the Pharisees, they derided him as a visionary speculatist, who despised the pleasures of this world, for no other reason than because he was not able to procure them. It is, therefore, no wonder that men who had shown such a complication of the very worst dispositions should receive a sharp rebuke from the meek and humble Jesus; accordingly, he told them that they made, indeed, specious pretences to extraordinary sanctity, by outwardly shunning the company of sinners, while in private they made no scruple of having society with them, or even of joining with them in their wickedness. “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts.” Ye may, indeed, cover the foulness of your crimes with the painted cloak of hypocrisy, and in this disguise deceive those who look no further than the outside, but ye cannot screen your wickedness from the penetrating eye of Omnipotence, to whom all things are naked and exposed, and who judges of things, not by their appearances, but according to truth; it is, therefore, no wonder that he often abhors both persons and things that are held by men in the highest estimation: “for that

which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

But the Pharisees, like the Sadducees, stupefied and intoxicated with sensual pleasures, were deaf to every argument, how powerful soever, provided it was levelled against their lusts. In order to illustrate this truth, confirm his assertion, and rouse these hypocritical rulers from their lethargy, he spoke the awakening parable of the Rich Man and the Beggar.

"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; moreover," so great was his misery, so exquisite his distress, "the dogs came and licked his sores." Thus wretched in life, the Almighty at last released him: "the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Nor could the rich man's wealth rescue him from the same fate: "the rich man also died, and was buried." But behold now the great, the awful change! "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and" the late despised and afflicted "Lazarus in his bosom." In this agony of pain and distress, he cried to Abraham, his earthly father, begging that he would take pity on him, and send Lazarus to give him even the least degree of relief, that of dipping the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, for his torment was intolerable. "Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham

said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Luke xvi. 24, etc.

The miserable wretch, finding it impossible to procure any relief for himself, was desirous of preserving his thoughtless relations from the like distress. "Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Luke xvi. 27, 28. This also was a petition that could not be granted. It is too late to hope for relief, when the soul is cast into the bottomless pit. They may learn, said Abraham, the certainty of the immortality of the soul from the books of Moses and the prophets, if they will give themselves the trouble to peruse them attentively. To which the miserable object replied, that the books of Moses and the prophets had been ineffectual to him, and he feared would be so to his brethren. But if one actually arose from the dead, and appeared to them, they would certainly repent, and embrace those offers of salvation they had before slighted. "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham told him, that in this he was greatly mistaken, for that if they refused to believe the evidence of a future state, contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets, the testimony of a messenger from the dead would not be sufficient to convince them. "If they hear not Moses and the

prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

This truth, asserted by Abraham, has been abundantly proved by undeniable facts; from whence it has appeared, that those who will not be convinced by a standing revelation, will not be convinced, though one rose from the dead. These very Jews, to whom our Saviour spoke, were remarkable instances of this truth; they were fully assured, that another Lazarus was, by the power of Christ, raised from the dead, after he had lain several days in the tomb: a fact which they were so far from being able to disprove, that they attempted to kill Lazarus; as if, by this wicked action, they could have destroyed his evidence. Nay, they had a still more lively proof, in the resurrection of Jesus himself, which they were so far from being able to deny, that they bribed the soldiers to spread that senseless tale, that his disciples came by night and stole him away. So true were Abraham's words, that they who believe not Moses and the prophets, which testify of Christ and his eternal redemption, would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR LORD IS APPLIED TO IN BEHALF OF LAZARUS—CURES TEN PERSONS OF THE LEPROSY IN PEREA, AND RESTORES LAZARUS TO LIFE.

Soon after our blessed Saviour had finished these discourses, one of his friends, named Lazarus, fell sick

at Bethany, a village about two miles from Jerusalem, and far from the countries beyond Jordan, where Jesus was now preaching the gospel. . The sisters of Lazarus, finding his sickness was of a dangerous kind, thought proper to send an account of it to Jesus; being firmly persuaded that he who had cured so many strangers, would readily come and give health to one whom he loved in so tender a manner. "Lord," said they, "behold, he whom thou lovest is sick:" they did not add, Come down and heal him, make haste and save him from the grave: it was sufficient for them to relate their necessities to their Lord, who was both able and willing to help them from their distress.

"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death." This declaration of the benevolent Jesus, being carried to the sisters of Lazarus, must have strangely surprised them, and exercised both theirs' and his disciples' faith; since it is probable that, before the messenger arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had expired. Soon after, Jesus positively assured his disciples that "Lazarus was dead."*

The evangelist, in the beginning of this account, tells us that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus, and also that after he had received the message he abode two days in the same place where he was. His design in this might be to intimate that his lingering so long after the message came, did not proceed from a want of concern for his friends, but happened according to the counsels of his own wisdom. For the length of time which Lazarus lay in the grave put his death beyond all possibility of doubt, removed every suspicion of

* See note page 267.

fraud, and consequently afforded Jesus a fit opportunity of displaying the love he bore to Lazarus, as well as his undoubted resurrection from the dead. His sisters, indeed, were, by this means, kept awhile in painful anxiety on account of their brother's life, and at last pierced by the sorrows of seeing him die; yet they must surely think themselves abundantly recompensed by the evidence, according to the gospel, from this astonishing miracle, as well as by the inexpressible surprise of joy they felt, when they again received their brother from the dead.

Jesus having declared his resolution of returning into Judea, Thomas, conceiving nothing less than destruction from such a journey, yet unwilling to forsake his Master, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Let us not forsake our Master in this dangerous journey, but accompany him into Judea, that, if the Jews, whose inveteracy we are well acquainted with, should take away his life, we may also expire with him.*

The journey to Judea being thus resolved on, Jesus departed with his disciples on his way to Bethany. "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off; and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them he said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priest. And it came to pass, that as they went they were cleansed." Luke xvii. 12.

* This is the first remark recorded of Thomas, and it speaks well for his love to his Master. If he was slow to believe, he was quick to feel, full of generous sympathy, and fearless of impending danger when the path of duty was clear.

Among these miserable objects, one of them was a native of Samaria, who, perceiving that his cure was complete, came back, praising God for the great mercy he had received. He had before kept at a distance from our Saviour; but, being now sensible that he was entirely clean, he approached his benefactor, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle, and fell on his face at his feet, thanking him, in the most humble manner, for his condescension in healing him of so terrible a disease. Jesus, in order to intimate that those who were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth ought, at least, to have shown as great sense of piety and gratitude as this Samaritan, asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Luke xvii. 17, 18.

Jesus and his disciples now continued their journey toward Bethany, where he was informed, by some of the inhabitants of that village, that Lazarus was not only dead, as he had foretold, but had now lain in the grave four days. The afflicted sisters were overwhelmed with sorrow; so that many of the Jews from Jerusalem came to comfort them concerning their brother.

It seems the news of our Lord's coming had reached Bethany before he arrived at the village; for Martha, the sister of Lazarus, being informed of his approach, went out and met him; but Mary, who was of a more melancholy and contemplative disposition, sat still in the house. No sooner was Martha come into the presence of Jesus, than, in an excess of grief, she poured forth her complaint: Lord, said she, if thou hadst complied with the message we sent thee, I well know that

thy interest with heaven had prevailed : my brother had been cured of his disease and preserved from the chambers of the grave.

Martha, doubtless, entertained a high opinion of our Saviour's power : she believed that death did not dare to approach his presence ; and, consequently, if Jesus had arrived at Bethany before her brother's dissolution, he had not fallen a victim to the king of terrors. But she imagined it was not in his power to heal the sick at a distance ; though, at the same time, she seemed to have some dark and imperfect hopes that our blessed Saviour would still do something for her. "But I know," said she, "that *even now*, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She thought that Jesus could obtain whatsoever he desired by prayer, and therefore did not found hopes on his power, but on the power of God, through his intercession. She doubtless knew that the great Redeemer of mankind had raised the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son at Nain, from the dead, but seems to have considered her brother's resurrection as much more difficult, probably because he had been longer dead.

But Jesus, who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith of Martha, answered : "Thy brother shall rise again." As these words were delivered in an indefinite sense with regard to time, Martha understood them only as an argument of consolation drawn from the general resurrection, and accordingly answered : "I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." She was firmly persuaded of that important article of the Christian faith, the "resurrection of the dead ;" at which important hour she believed her brother would

rise from the dust. And here she seems to have terminated all her hopes, not thinking that the Son of God would call her brother from the sleep of death. Jesus, therefore, to instruct her in the great truth, replied, "I am the resurrection and the life." I am the author of the resurrection, the fountain and giver of that life they shall then receive, and therefore can with the same ease raise the dead now as at the last day. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" To which Martha answered, "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." I believe that thou art the true Messiah, so long promised by the prophets, and therefore believe that thou art capable of performing every instance of power that thou art pleased to claim.

Martha now left Jesus, and called her sister, according to his order. Mary no sooner heard that Jesus was come than she immediately left her Jewish comforters, who increased the weight of her grief, and flew to her Saviour. The Jews, who suspected she was going to weep over the grave of her brother, followed her to that great Prophet who was going to remove all her sorrows. Thus the Jews, who came from Jerusalem to comfort the two mournful sisters, were brought to the grave of Lazarus and made witnesses of his resurrection.

As soon as Mary approached the great Redeemer of mankind, she fell prostrate at his feet, and, in a flood of tears, poured out her complaint: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." No wonder the compassionate Jesus was moved at so affecting a scene:

on this side stood Martha, pouring forth a flood of tears; at his feet lay the affectionate Mary, weeping and lamenting her dear departed brother; while the Jews, who came to comfort the afflicted sisters, unable to confine their grief, joined the common mourning, and mixed their friendly tears, in witness of their love for the departed Lazarus, and in testimony to the justice of the sisters' grief for the loss of so amiable, so deserving a brother. Jesus could not behold the affliction of these two sisters and their friends without having a share in it himself: his heart was melted at the mournful scene: "he groaned in spirit, and was troubled."

To remove the doubts and fears of these pious women, he asked them where they had buried Lazarus—not that he was ignorant where the body of the deceased was laid; he who knew that he was dead, when so far distant from him, and could raise him up by a single word, must have known where his remains were deposited—to which they answered: "Lord, come and see." The Son of God, to prove that he was not only so, but a most compassionate man, and to show us that the tender affections of the human heart, when kept in due bounds, and that friendly sorrow, when not immoderate and directed to proper ends, are consistent with the highest sanctity of the soul, joined in the general mourning. He wept even at the time he was going to give the most ample proof of his divinity.

By his weeping, the Jews were convinced that he loved Lazarus exceedingly; but some of them interpreted this circumstance to his disadvantage; or, according to their mean way of judging, they fancied he had suffered him to fall by the stroke of death for no other reason in the

world but for want of power and affection to rescue him. "Could not this man," said they, "which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Our Lord, regardless of their question, but grieving for the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their infidelity, groaned within himself as he walked toward the sepulchre of the dead. At his coming to the grave, he said, "Take ye away the stone." To which Martha answered, "Lord, by this time he smelleth; for he hath been dead four days." She meant to intimate that her brother's resurrection was not now to be expected; but Jesus gave her a solemn reproof, to teach her that there was nothing impossible with God, and that the power of the Almighty is not to be circumscribed within the narrow bounds of human reason. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" *i. e.*, Have but faith, and I will display before thee the power of Omnipotence.

The objections of Martha being thus obviated, she, with the rest, awaited the great event in silence, and, in pursuance with the command of the Son of God, took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. Jesus had, on many occasions, publicly appealed to his own miracles as the proofs of his mission, though he did not usually make a formal address to his Father before he worked those miracles. But, being now to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed for his resurrection, to convince the spectators that it could not be effected without an immediate interposition of the Divine power. "Father," said he, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And *I* know that thou hearest me always; but

because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”* John xi. 41, 42.

After returning thanks to his Father for this opportunity of displaying his glory, “he cried, with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth.” This loud and efficacious call of the Son of God awakened the dead; the breathless clay was instantly reanimated; and he who had lain four days in the tomb obeyed immediately the powerful sound. “And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.” John xi. 44. It would have been the least part of the miracle had Jesus by his powerful word unloosed the napkin wherewith Lazarus was bound; but he brought him out in the same manner as he was lying, and ordered the spectators to loose him, that they might be the better convinced of the miracle; for in taking off the grave-clothes they had the fullest evidence both of his death and resurrection. For, on the one hand, the manner in which he was swathed must soon have killed him if he had been alive when buried; which consequently demonstrated, beyond all exception, that Lazarus had been dead several days before Jesus called him again to life; besides, in stripping him the linen probably offered, both to their eye and smell, abundant proofs of his

* This is the only miracle recorded of Jesus which was prefaced by audible prayer. Yet the communion of spirit between the Son of God and the Father who sent him, was constant and uninterrupted. John v. 19-21. It was to manifest this fact to others on this great occasion that Jesus thus spoke.

putrefaction, and by that means convinced them that he had not been in a swoon, but was really dead. On the other hand, by his lively countenance appearing when the napkin was removed, his fresh color, and his active vigor, those who came near and handled him must be convinced that he was in perfect health, and had an opportunity of proving the truth of the miracle by the closest examination.

There is something exceedingly beautiful in our Lord's behavior on this occasion : he did not utter one upbraiding word, either to the doubting sisters or the malicious Jews, nor did he let fall one word of triumph or exultation : "Loose him, and let him go," were the only words we have recorded. He was on this, as on all other occasions, consistent with himself, a pattern of perfect humility and modesty.

Such was the astonishing work wrought by the Son of God at Bethany ; and in the resurrection of Lazarus, thus corrupted, and thus raised by the powerful call of Jesus, we have a striking emblem and glorious earnest of the resurrection of our bodies from the grave at the last day, when the same powerful mandate which spoke Lazarus again into being shall collect the scattered particles of our bodies and raise them to immortality.

Such an extraordinary power, displayed before the face of a multitude, and near to Jerusalem, even overcame the prejudices of some of the most obstinate among them. Many believed that Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah so long promised ; though others, who still expected a temporal prince, and therefore were unwilling to acknowledge him for their Saviour, were filled with indignation, particularly the chief priests and

elders. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." John xi. 47, 48. The common people, astonished at his miracles, will, if we do not take care to prevent it, certainly set him up for the Messiah; and the Romans, under pretence of a rebellion, will deprive us both of our liberty and religion. Accordingly, they came to a resolution to put him to death. This resolution was not, however, unanimous; for Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and other disciples of our Saviour, then members of the council, urged the injustice of what they proposed to do, from the consideration of his miracles and innocence. But Caiaphas, the high-priest, from a principle of human policy, told them that the nature of government often required certain acts of injustice in order to secure the safety of the state. "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."* John xi. 49, 50.

* The evangelist John calls this a prophecy (unconscious to the wicked high-priest in its highest sense), because it was the recognition of the fundamental principle of Christ's redeeming sacrifice, as related to the government of God and the salvation of men. Only in that relation there was no injustice committed when "the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" since Christ of his own accord "offered himself for us," and "suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Isaiah liii. 6; Ephes. v. 2; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Thus the whole Jewish nation, as represented by the high-priest in its highest council, while actuated by the most selfish spirit of enmity to the Redeemer, was eventually led to endorse the great principle of the Atonement—SUBSTITUTIONAL SUFFERING. How truly it may be said of God, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness!"

The council, having thus determined to put Jesus to death, deliberated, for the future, only upon the best methods of effecting it, and, in all probability, agreed to issue a proclamation promising a reward to any person who would deliver him into their hands. For this reason, our blessed Saviour did not now go up to Jerusalem, though he was within two miles of it, but went to Ephraim, a city on the borders of the wilderness,* where he abode with his disciples, being unwilling to go far into the country, because the Passover, at which he was to suffer, was now at hand.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE GREAT PROPHET OF ISRAEL FORETELLS THE RUIN OF THE JEWISH STATE, AND ENFORCES MANY IMPORTANT DOCTRINES BY PARABLE—HE BLESSETH THE CHILDREN, AS EMBLEMS OF THE HEAVENLY AND CHRISTIAN TEMPER AND DISPOSITION.

WHILE the blessed Jesus remained in retirement at Ephraim, he was desired by some of the Pharisees to inform them when the Messiah's kingdom would commence. Nor was their anxiety on that account a matter of surprise; for, as they entertained very exalted notions

* This town lay about seventeen miles north and east of Jerusalem, beyond the boundary line of Judea. It was five miles northeast of Bethel in the border of Samaria. In 2 Chron. xiii. 19, 20, it is mentioned in connection with Bethel, as a city of some importance.

of his coming in pomp and magnificence, it was natural for them to be very desirous of having his empire speedily erected. But our Saviour, to correct this mistaken notion, told them that the Messiah's kingdom did not consist in any external form of government, erected in some particular country by the terror of arms, and desolation of war; but in the subjection of the minds of men, and in rendering them conformable to the laws of the Almighty, which was to be effected by a new dispensation of religion, and this dispensation was already begun. It was, therefore, needless for them to seek in this or that place for the kingdom of God; as it had been already preached among them by Christ and his Apostles, and confirmed by innumerable miracles. "The kingdom of God," said he, "cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke xvii. 20, 21.

Having thus addressed the Pharisees, he turned himself to his disciples, and in the hearing of all the people prophesied the destruction of the Jewish state; whose administration, both religious and civil, was the chief difficulty that opposed the erection of his kingdom. Luke xvii. 23.

Having foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and warned them against mistakes as to his second coming, our blessed Saviour spake the following parable, in order to excite them to a constant perseverance in prayer, and not to be so weary and faint in their minds, as to neglect, or wholly omit, this necessary duty.

There was in a city, said the Saviour of the world, a judge, who, being governed by atheistical principles,

had no regard to the precepts of religion, and being very powerful did not regard what was said of him by any man; so that all his decisions were influenced merely by passion or interest. In the same city was also a widow, who, having no friends to assist her, was absolutely unable to defend herself from injuries, or procure redress for any she had received. In this deplorable situation, she had recourse to the unjust judge, in order to obtain satisfaction for some oppressive wrong she had lately received; but the judge was so abandoned to pleasure, that he refused, for a time, to listen to her request; he would not give himself the trouble to examine her case, though the crying injustice pleaded so powerfully for this distressed widow. She was not, however, intimidated by his refusal; she incessantly importuned him, till, by repeated representations of her distress, she filled his mind with such displeasing ideas, that he was obliged to do her justice, merely to free himself from her importunity. "Though," said he to himself, "I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest, by her continual coming, she weary me." Luke xviii. 4, 5.

"Hear," said the blessed Jesus, "what the unjust judge saith; and shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Luke xviii. 6, etc. As if he had said, if this man, though destitute of the fear either of God or man, was thus prompted to espouse the cause of the widow, shall not a righteous God, the Father of his people, avenge on the wicked the many evils they have done

unto them, though he bear long with them? Certainly he will, and that in a most awful manner.

Our blessed Saviour having thus enforced the duty of prayer, in this expressive parable, asked the following apposite question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As if he had said, notwithstanding all the miracles I have wrought, and the excellent doctrines I have delivered, shall I find, at my second coming, that faith among the children of men there is reason to expect? Will not most of them be found to have abandoned the faith, and wantonly ask, "where is the promise of his coming?"

The blessed Jesus next rebuked the self-righteous Pharisees. But as these particulars are better illustrated by their opposites, he placed the character of this species of men in opposition to those of the humble; describing the reception each class met with from the Almighty, in a parable of the Pharisee and Publican, who went up together to the temple, at the time when the sacrifice was offered, to direct their petitions to the God of their fathers. Luke xviii. 12.

Specious as the Pharisee's behaviour may seem, his prayer was an abomination to the Lord; while the poor Publican, who confessed his guilt, and implored mercy, was justified in the sight of God, rather than this arrogant boaster.

This parable sufficiently indicates that all the sons of men stand in need of mercy. Both the strict Pharisee and the despised Publican, with the whole race of mankind, are sinners; and consequently all must implore pardon of their benevolent Creator. We must all ascend to the temple, and there pour forth our prayers before

the throne of grace ; for there he has promised ever to be present, to grant the petitions of all who ask in sincerity and truth, through the Son of his love.

These parables were spoken in the town of Ephraim : and during his continuance in that city, the Pharisees asked him, Whether he thought it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause ? Our Saviour had twice before declared his opinion of this particular, once in Galilee, and once in Perea ; it is therefore probable that the Pharisees were not ignorant of his sentiments, and that they asked that question then, to find an opportunity of incensing the people against him, well knowing that the Israelites held the liberty which the law gave them of divorcing their wives as one of their chief privileges. But however that be, Jesus was far from fearing the popular resentment, and accordingly declared the third time against arbitrary divorces. “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery.” Matt. xix. 9. “And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” Mark x. 10, etc.

The practice of unlimited divorces, which prevailed among the Jews, gave great encouragement to family quarrels, were very destructive of happiness, and hindered the education of their common offspring. Besides, it greatly tended to make their children lose that reverence for them which is due to parents, as it was hardly possible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel.

Our Lord’s prohibition, therefore, of these divorces is

founded on the strongest reasons, and greatly tends to promote the welfare of society.

Our Saviour having, in the course of his ministry, performed innumerable cures, in different parts of the country, several persons, thinking, perhaps, that his power would be as great in preventing as in removing distempers, or certainly in securing their spiritual good, brought their children to him, desiring that he would put his hands upon them and bless them. The disciples, however, mistaking the intention, were angry with the persons, and rebuked them for endeavoring to give this trouble to their Master. But Jesus no sooner saw it, than he was greatly displeased with his disciples, and ordered them not to hinder parents from bringing their children to him. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Luke xviii. 16.

Such are those, in a spiritual light, who are brought to a sense of their sins, and humbled for them in the sight of God.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUR LORD DEPARTS FROM HIS RETIREMENT—DECLARES THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION—SHOWS THE DUTY OF IMPROVING THE MEANS OF GRACE BY THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD—PREDICTION OF HIS SUFFERING, AND CONTENTION OF THE DISCIPLES ABOUT PRECEDENCE IN HIS KINGDOM.

THE period of our blessed Saviour's passion now approaching, he departed from Ephraim, and repaired, by the way of Jericho, toward Jerusalem; but before he arrived at Jericho, a ruler of the synagogue came running to him, and kneeling down before him, asked him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Matt. xix. 16.

Though this young ruler pretended to pay great honor to our dear Redeemer, yet the whole was no more than a piece of mockery. For though he styled him "good," yet he did not believe that he was sent from God, as sufficiently appears from his refusing to observe the counsel given him by Jesus: nor could his artful insinuations escape the piercing eye of the great Saviour of the world. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, willing to make him sensible of his secret desire of possessing the riches of this world, told him, that if he aimed at perfection, he should distribute his possessions among the poor and indigent, and become his disciple. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and

follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Matt. xix. 21, 22.

This melancholy instance of the pernicious influence of riches over the minds of the children of men, induced our blessed Saviour to caution his disciples against fixing their minds on things of such frightful tendency, by showing how very difficult it was for a rich man to procure a habitation in the regions of eternal happiness. "Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel" (*i. e.* a cable, or large rope) "to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matt. xix. 23, etc. By the assistance of grace, which the Almighty never refuses to those who seek it with their whole heart, it is possible.

This answer of the blessed Jesus was, however, far from satisfying his disciples, who had, doubtless, often reflected with pleasure on the high posts they were to enjoy in their Master's kingdom. Peter seems particularly to have been disappointed: and therefore addressed his Master, in the name of the rest, begging him to remember that his Apostles had actually done what the young man had refused. They had abandoned their relations, their friends, their possessions, and their employments, on his account: and therefore desired to know what reward they were to expect for these

instances of their obedience? To which Jesus replied, that they should not fail of a reward, even in this life; for immediately after his resurrection, when he ascended to his Father, and entered on his mediatorial office, they should be advanced to the honor of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; that is, of spiritually ruling the church of Christ, which they were to plant in different parts of the earth. “Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Matt. xix. 28.

Having given this answer to Peter, he next mentioned the rewards his other disciples should receive, both in this world and in that which is to come. They, said he, who have forsaken all for my sake, shall be no losers in the end. Divine Providence will take care they have every thing valuable that can be given them by their relations, or they could desire from large possessions. They shall, indeed, be fed with the bread of sorrow, but this shall produce joys to which all the earthly pleasures bear no proportion; and, in the end, obtain everlasting life. Things shall then be reversed, and those who have been reviled and contemned on earth, for the sake of the gospel, shall be exalted to honor, glory and immortality: while the others shall be consigned to eternal infamy. “But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” Matt. xix. 30.

To excite their ardent pressing forward in faith and good works, our Lord relates the parable of the householder, who, at different hours of the day, hired laborers to work in his vineyard.

The glorious gospel, with all its blessings, was bestowed entirely by the free grace of God, and without any thing in men to merit it; besides, it was offered promiscuously to all, whether good or bad, and embraced by persons of all characters. The conclusion of the parable deserves our utmost attention; we should meditate upon it, and take care to make our calling and election sure. Matt. xx. 1-16.

After Jesus had finished these discourses, he continued his journey toward Jerusalem, where the chief priests and elders, soon after the resurrection of Lazarus, had issued a proclamation, promising a reward to any one who should apprehend him. In all probability, this was the reason why the disciples were astonished at the alacrity of our Lord during this journey, while they themselves followed him trembling. Jesus, therefore, thought proper to repeat the prophecies concerning his sufferings, in order to show his disciples that they were entirely voluntary: adding, that though the Jews should put him to death, yet, instead of weakening, it should increase their faith, especially as he would rise again, the third day, from the dead. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, shall be accomplished: For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again." Luke xviii. 32, 33.

As this prediction manifestly tended to the confirmation of the ancient prophecies, it must have given the greatest encouragement to his disciples, had they understood and applied it in a proper manner; but they did

not. "And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken."*

The sons of Zebedee were so ignorant, that they thought their Master, by his telling them that he would rise again from the dead, meant that he would then erect his empire, and accordingly begged that he would confer on them the chief posts in his kingdom; which they expressed by desiring to be seated, the "one on his right hand, and the other on his left," in allusion to his placing the twelve apostles upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.

Bnt Jesus told them they were ignorant of the nature of the honor they requested; and since they desired to share with him in glory, asked them if they were willing to share with him also in his sufferings. "Ye know not what ye ask; are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Matt. xx. 22.

The two disciples, ravished with the prospect of the dignity they were aspiring after, replied, without hesitation, that they were both able and willing to share any hardship their Master might meet with, in the way to the kingdom. To which he answered that they should certainly share with him his troubles and afflictions: "Ye shall drink, indeed, of my cup, and be baptized

* The blinding power of early prejudice, confirmed in each individual by the prejudices of the community, and the concurrent teachings of the learned expositors of the Scriptures, was never more strikingly exemplified than here. Even faith in the Son of God often fails to pierce through the thick veil so firmly woven, until aided by some new influence of the Holy Spirit, or that development of divine Providence which has been happily called, in our time, "the logic of events."

with the baptism I am baptized with ; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give but unto them for whom it is prepared by my Father." Matt. xx. 23.

This ambitious request of the two brothers raised the indignation of the rest of the disciples, who, thinking themselves equally deserving the principal posts in the Messiah's kingdom, were highly offended at the arrogance of the sons of Zebedee. Jesus, therefore, in order to restore harmony among his disciples, told them that his kingdom was very different from those of the present world, and the greatness of his disciples did not, like that of secular princes, consist in reigning over others in an absolute and despotic manner. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant : even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. xx. 25, etc. Ye know that rank and precedence pass for merit of character here : but Christian greatness and spiritual precedence consists in humility, love, and labor, of which Christ your Saviour was made an eminent pattern.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BENEVOLENT SAVIOUR RESTORES SIGHT TO THE BLIND AT JERICHO—KINDLY REGARDS ZACCHEUS, THE PUBLICAN—DELIVERS THE PARABLE OF THE SERVANTS ENTRUSTED WITH THEIR LORD'S MONEY—ACCEPTS THE KIND OFFICES OF MARY—MAKES A PUBLIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

JESUS, with his disciples, and the multitude that accompanied him, were now arrived at Jericho, a famous city of Palestine, and the second in the kingdom.* Near this town, Jesus cured two blind men, who sat by the road begging, and expressed their belief in him as the Messiah. “And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold, two blind men, sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace; but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.” Matt. xx. 29, etc.

The importunate request had its desired effect on the Son of God. He stood still, and called them to him, that by their manner of walking, spectators might be convinced they were really blind. As soon as they approached him, he asked them, What they requested with such earnestness? They say, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” This request was not made in vain; their compassionate Saviour touched their eyes,

and immediately they received sight, and followed him, glorifying and praising God.*

Zaccheus, chief of the Publicans, having often heard the fame of our Saviour's miracles, was desirous of seeing his person; but the lowness of his stature preventing him from satisfying his curiosity, "he ran before, and climbed up a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way." As Jesus approached the place where he was, "he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." Luke xix. 5.

The Publican expressed his joy at our Lord's condescending to visit him, took him to his house, and showed him all the marks of civility in his power. But the people, when they saw he was going to the house of a Publican, condemned his conduct, as not conformable to the character of a prophet. Zaccheus seems to have heard these unjust reflections; and, therefore, was willing to justify himself before Jesus and his attendants. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Luke xix. 8, etc.

Our Saviour, further to convince the people that the

* Mark mentions but one of these blind men, probably because the case of Bartimeus was so much more generally known to the people. His conciseness of style often shows itself by selecting only the more striking example out of several mentioned together by the other evangelists. There is nothing like contradiction in this. It is rather a striking and original mode of confirmation by an independent witness of all that is material to the point in hand—the miraculous power of Jesus.

design of his mission was to seek and to restore life and salvation to lost and perishing sinners, adds, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

While Jesus continued in the house of Zaccheus, the Publican, he spake a parable to his followers, who supposed, at his arrival in the royal city, he would erect the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah. "A certain nobleman," said he, "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at

my coming I might have required mine own with usury ? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds (and they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds). For I say unto you, That unto every one that hath shall be given; and from him which hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Luke xix. 12, etc.

After speaking this parable, Jesus left the house of Zaccheus, the Publican, and continued his journey to Jerusalem, where he proposed to celebrate the Passover: he was earnestly expected by the people, who came to up to purify themselves, and who began to doubt whether he would venture to come to the feast.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, and repaired to the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. "There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor

always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always." John xii. 2, etc.

As Bethany was not above two miles from Jerusalem, the news of his arrival was soon spread through the capital, and great numbers of the citizens came to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, together with the great Prophet who had wrought so stupendous a miracle, and many of them were convinced both of the resurrection of the former, and the divinity of the latter ; but the news of their conversion, together with the reason of it, being currently reported in Jerusalem, the chief priests were soon sensible of the weight so great a miracle must have on the minds of the people ; and therefore determined, if possible, to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death.

Our blessed Lord, though he knew the design of the Jews upon him, also knew that it became him to fulfil all righteousness ; and was so far from declining to visit Jerusalem, that he even entered it in a public manner. When they "were come to Bethphage* unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go unto the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her : loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an

* Bethphage was a small village at the foot of Mount Olivet, on the eastern side, toward Jericho. It was near Bethany, and was famous for the abundance of its figs.

ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way: others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest." Matt. xxi. 1-3, etc.

The prodigious multitude that now accompanied Jesus filled the Pharisees and great men with malice and envy, because every method they had taken to hinder the people from following Jesus had proved ineffectual. "The Pharisees, therefore, said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him." John xii. 19.

But when our blessed Saviour drew near the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, notwithstanding the many affronts he had there received, he beheld the city, and with a divine generosity and benevolence which nothing can equal, wept over it, and, in the most pathetic manner, lamented the calamities which he saw were coming upon it, because its inhabitants were ignorant of the time of their visitation. "If," said he, "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they

shall not leave in thee one stone upon another : because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke xix. 42, etc.

Behold here, ye wondering mortals, behold an example of generosity infinitely superior to any furnished by the heathen world !

When Jesus, surrounded by the multitude, entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved on account of the prodigious concourse of people that accompanied him, and their continual acclamations. Jesus rode immediately to the temple ; but it being evening, he soon left the city, to the great discouragement of the people, who expected he was immediately to have taken into his hands the reins of government. "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple ; and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve." Mark xi. 11.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JESUS PRONOUNCES A CURSE UPON THE FIG TREE—EXPELS AGAIN THE PROFANERS OF THE TEMPLE—ASSERTS HIS DIVINE AUTHORITY, AND DELIVERS TWO PARABLES.

AT the earliest dawn our blessed Saviour left Bethany to visit again the capital of Judea. As he pursued his journey, he saw, at a distance, a fig tree, which, from its fulness of leaves, promised abundance of fruit. This

inviting object induced him to approach it, in expectation of finding figs, for he was hungry, and the season for gathering them was not yet arrived; but on his coming to the tree, he found it to be really barren: upon which the blessed Jesus said to it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever." Matt. xxi. 19.

Being disappointed in finding fruit on the fig tree, our blessed Saviour pursued his journey to Jerusalem; and, on his arrival, went straightway to the temple, the outer court of which he again found full of merchandise. A sight like this vexed his meek and righteous soul, so that he drove them all out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer any vessel to be carried through the temple, "saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." Luke xix. 46.

Having dispersed this venal tribe, the people brought unto him the blind, the lame, and the diseased, who were all healed by the Son of God; so that the very children, when they saw the many miraculous cures he performed, proclaimed him to be the great Son of David, the long expected Messiah.

Such behaviour not a little incensed the Pharisees: but they feared the people, and therefore only asked him, if he heard what the children said? insinuating, that he ought to rebuke them, and not suffer them thus to load him with the highest praises. But Jesus, instead of giving a direct answer to their question, repeated a passage out of the eighth Psalm. "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength?" Giving them to understand, that

the very least of God's works have been made instrumental in spreading his praise.

During the time the blessed Jesus remained in the temple, certain proselyted Greeks,* who came up to worship at Jerusalem, desired to see him, having long cherished expectations of beholding the promised Messiah. Accordingly, they applied to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, who mentioned it to Andrew, and he told it to Jesus. Upon which our blessed Saviour told his disciples that he should soon be honored with the conversion of the Gentiles: "The hour is come," said he, "that the Son of man should be glorified." But he declared, that before this glorious event happened, he must suffer death; illustrating the necessity there was of his dying, by the similitude of casting grain into the earth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John xii. 24. Adding, that since it was absolutely necessary for him, their Lord and Master, to suffer the pains of death before he ascended the throne of his glory; so they, as his followers, must also expect to be persecuted and spitefully used for his name's sake; but if they persevered, and even resolved to lose their lives in his service, he would reward their constancy with a crown of glory. At the same time he intimated, that the strangers, if their desire of conversing with him proceeded from a hope of obtaining from him temporal preferments, would find themselves sadly disappointed. "If any man serve

* Greeks, in the New Testament, represent all Gentiles in distinction from Jews.

me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." John xii. 26.

Our blessed Lord was now so affected, in the near view of his cross, that he addressed his heavenly Father for succor in his distress. "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." John xii. 27.

Our blessed Lord having made a short prayer to his Father, begged him to demonstrate the truth of his mission by some token which could not be resisted. "Father, glorify thy name." Nor had he hardly uttered these words, before he was answered by an audible voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

This voice was evidently preternatural, resembling thunder in loudness, but sufficiently articulate to be understood by those who heard our blessed Saviour pray to his heavenly Father. And Jesus told his disciples that it was not given for his sake, but to confirm them in the faith of his mission. "This voice," said he, "came not because of me, but for your sakes." It came to confirm what I have told you relating to my sufferings, death, resurrection, and the conversion of the Gentile world to the Christian religion.

The kingdom of Satan shall be destroyed, and that of the Messiah exalted. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii. 31, etc.

The people, not understanding the force of this affir-

mation, replied, "We have heard, out of the law, that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up?" John xii. 34. Our Lord, in answer, told them, that they should soon be deprived of his presence and miracles; and, therefore, they would do well to listen attentively to his precepts, firmly believe the doctrines he delivered, and wisely improve them to their eternal advantage; for otherwise they would be soon overtaken with spiritual blindness, and rendered incapable of inheriting the promises of the gospel. That while they enjoyed the benefit of his preaching and miracles, which sufficiently proved the truth of his mission from the Most High, they should believe on him: for by that means alone they could become the children of God. "Yet a little while is the light with you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John xii. 35, etc.

But notwithstanding the many miracles our great Redeemer had wrought in presence of these perverse and stiff-necked people, the generality of them refused to own him for the Messiah; being filled with the vain expectations of a temporal prince, who was to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, and place his throne in Jerusalem. Some, indeed, even of the rulers, believed on him, though they thought it prudent to conceal their faith, lest they should, like the blind man, be excommunicated, or put out of the synagogue; valuing the good opinion of men above the approbation of the Almighty.

Nevertheless, to inspire such as believed on him with courage, he cried in the temple, "He that believeth on

me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." John xii. 44. He that acknowledges the divinity of my mission, acknowledges the power and grace of God, on whose special errand I am thus sent. Adding, he that seeth the miracles I perform, seeth the operations of that Omnipotent Power by which I act. I am the Sun of righteousness, whose beams dispel the darkness of ignorance in which the sons of men are involved, and am come to deliver all who believe on me out of that palpable darkness. You must not, however, expect that I will at present execute my judgment upon those who refuse to embrace the doctrines of the gospel; for I am not come to condemn and punish, but to save the world, and consequently to try every gentle and winning method to reclaim the wicked from the error of their ways, and turn their feet into the paths of life and salvation. They shall not, however, escape unpunished, who neglect the instructions and offers of salvation now made to them; for the doctrines I have preached shall bear witness against them at the awful tribunal of the last day; and as it has aggravated their sin, so shall it then heighten their punishment.

While Jesus was thus preaching in the temple, a deputation of priests and elders was sent from the supreme council, to ask him concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted, whether it was that of a prophet, priest, or king, as no other person had a right to make any alterations, either in church or state. And if he laid claim to either of those characters, from whom he received it? But our blessed Saviour, instead of giving a direct answer to the questions of the Pharisees, asked them another; promising, if they resolved

his question, he would also answer theirs. “I also, will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men?” Matt. xxi. 24, etc.

This question puzzled the priests. They considered, on the one hand, that if it was from God, it would oblige them to acknowledge the authority of Jesus, John having, more than once, publicly declared him to be the Messiah; and on the other, if they peremptorily denied the authority of John, they would be in danger of being stoned by the people, who, in general, considered him as a prophet. They, therefore, thought it the most eligible method to answer, that they could not tell from whence John’s baptism was.

Thus, by declining to answer the question asked them by Jesus, they left him at liberty to decline giving the council the satisfaction they had sent to demand. At the same time they plainly confessed, that they were unable to pass any opinion on John the Baptist, notwithstanding he claimed the character of a messenger from God, and they had sent to examine his pretensions. This was in effect, to acknowledge that they were incapable of judging of any prophet whatsoever. Well, therefore, might the blessed Jesus say, “Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.” You have no right to ask, since you have confessed you are unable to judge; and, therefore, I shall not satisfy your inquiry.

But because this deputation had said, that they were ignorant from whence the baptism of John was, our blessed Saviour sharply rebuked them, conveying his reproof in the parable of the two sons commanded to

work in their father's vineyard, and by asking their opinion of the two, made them condemn themselves.

The blessed Jesus did not only rebuke them for rejecting the preaching of the Baptist, but represented the crime of the nation, in rejecting all the prophets which had been sent since they became a nation ; among the rest, the only begotten Son of the Most High ; warning them, at the same time, of their danger, and the punishment that would inevitably ensue, if they continued in their rebellion. The outward economy of religion, in which they gloried, would be taken from them ; their relation to God, as his people, cancelled ; and the national constitution destroyed : but because these topics were extremely disagreeable, he delivered them under the veil of a parable : "There was," said he, "a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country," etc. Matt. xxi. 38.

Shocked at this awful representation, the Pharisees exclaimed, "God forbid ;" surely these husbandmen will not proceed to such desperate iniquity ; surely the vineyard will not thus be taken from them. But to confirm the truth of this, our Saviour added a remarkable prophecy of himself, and his rejection, cxviii. Psalm. "Did you never," said he, "read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner ; this is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes ?" The rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and the reception he met with among the Gentiles, all brought to pass by the providence of God, are wonderful events ; and therefore I say unto

you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. xxi. 38.

The chief priests and Pharisees being afraid to apprehend Jesus, he was at liberty to proceed in the offices of his ministry. Accordingly he delivered another parable, wherein he described, on the one hand, the bad success which the preaching of the gospel was to meet with among the Jews; and, on the other, the cheerful reception given it among the Gentiles. This gracious design of the Almighty, in giving the gospel to the children of men, our blessed Saviour illustrated by the behavior of a certain king, who, in honor of his son, made a great feast, to which he invited many guests. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." This marriage supper, or great feast, signifies the joys of heaven, which are properly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquisiteness and duration; and are here said to be prepared in honor of the Son of God, because they are bestowed on men in consequence of his sufferings in their stead and behalf.

Some time before the supper was ready, the servants went forth to call the guests to the wedding; *i. e.*, when the fulness of time approached, the Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were first called by John the Baptist, and afterward by Christ himself; but they refused all these benevolent calls of mercy, and rejected the kind invitations of the gospel, though pressed by the preaching of the Messiah, and his forerunner. After our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, the apostles were sent forth to inform the Jews that the gospel

covenant was established, mansions in heaven prepared, and nothing wanting but the cheerful acceptance of the honor designed them. "Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." But these messengers were as unsuccessful as the former. The Jews, undervaluing the favor offered them, mocked at the message; and some of them, more rude than the rest, insulted, beat, and slew the servants that had been sent to call them to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "But when the king heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." This part of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called here the armies of the Almighty, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance on that once favorite, but now rebellious people.

The parable is then continued, as follows: The king again sent forth his servants into the countries of the Gentiles, with orders to compel all that they met with to come into the marriage. This was immediately done, and the wedding was furnished with guests; but when the king came into the apartment, "he saw there a man which had not a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For

many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. xxi. 11, etc.

By the conclusion of the parable, we learn that the profession of the Christian religion will not save a man, unless he acts from Christian principles. Let us, therefore, who have obeyed the call, and are by profession the people of God, think often on that awful day, when the king will come in to see his guests; when the Almighty will, with the greatest strictness, view every soul that lays claim to the joys of heaven. Let us think of the speechless confusion that will seize such as have not on the wedding garment, and of the inexorable anxiety with which they will be consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth: and let us remember, that to have seen for awhile the light of the gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more sensible horrors to these gloomy caverns. On the other hand, to animate and encourage us, let us anticipate the joyful hour which will consign us to bliss immortal.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BLESSED JESUS WISELY RETORTS ON THE PHARISEES AND HERODIANS, WHO PROPOUND AN INTRICATE QUESTION TO HIM—SETTLES THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT OF THE LAW—ENFORCES HIS MISSION AND DOCTRINE, AND FORETELLS THE JUDGMENT THAT WOULD FALL UPON THE PHARISAICAL TRIBE.

THIS representation of the state of the finally impenitent, appearing to be levelled at the Pharisees, they immediately concerted with the Herodians and Sadducees, on the most proper method of putting Jesus to death. It is sufficiently evident, that their hatred was now carried to the highest pitch, because the most violent enmity which had so long subsisted between the two sects, was, on this occasion suspended, and they joined together to execute their cruel determination on the Son of God. They, however, thought it most eligible to act very cautiously, and endeavor, if possible, to catch some hasty expression from him, that they might render him odious to the people, and procure something against him that might serve as a basis for a persecution.

Accordingly, they sent some of their disciples to him, with orders to feign themselves just men, who maintained the greatest veneration for the divine law, and dreaded nothing more than the doing any thing inconsistent with its precepts: and, under this specious cloak of hypocrisy, to beg his determination of an affair that had long lain heavy on their consciences; namely, the paying tribute to Cæsar, which they thought inconsis-

rent with their zeal for religion. "Master," said they, "we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" Mark xii. 14.

But the blessed Jesus saw their secret intentions, and accordingly called them hypocrites, to signify that though they made conscience, and a regard for the divine will, their pretence for proposing this question. he saw through the thin veil that concealed their design from the eyes of mortals, and knew that their intention was to ensnare him.

He, however, did not decline answering their question, but previously desired to see a piece of the tribute money. The piece was accordingly produced, and proved to be coined by the Romans. Upon which our blessed Saviour answered them, since this money bears the image of Cæsar, it is his, and by making use of it, you acknowledge his authority. But at the same time that you discharge your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never forget the duty you owe to your God; but remember, that as you bear the image of the great, the omnipotent King, you are his subjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of yourselves, serving him to the very utmost of your power.

The Pharisees and their followers, under a pretence of religion, often justified sedition; but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themselves with the reigning powers, made them a compliment of their consciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, however opposite their commands might be to the divine law. Our

Lord, therefore, adapted his answer to them both, exhorting them, in their regards to God and the magistrate, to give each his due; there being no inconsistency between their rights, when their rights only are insisted on.

So unexpected an answer quite disconcerted and silenced these crafty enemies. They were astonished, both at his having discovered their design, and his wisdom in avoiding the snare they had so artfully laid for him. "When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way." Matt. xxii. 22.

Though our Lord thus wisely obviated their crafty designs, enemies came against him from every quarter. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of a future state, together with the existence of angels and spirits, came forward to the charge; proposing to him their strongest arguments against the resurrection, which they deduced from the law given by Moses, with regard to marriage. "Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife." Luke xx. 28, etc.

The Sadducees considered it as a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, or a future state, that every man's wife should be restored to him. But this argument our blessed Saviour soon confuted. He also observed, that the nature of the life obtained in a future state made marriage altogether superfluous, because in the world to come, men being spiritual and immortal, like the angels, there was no need of natural means to propagate or continue the kind. "Ye do err," said the blessed Jesus, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor

the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Matt. xxii. 29, 30. "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke xx. 36. Hence we may observe, that good men are called the children of the Most High, from their inheritance at the resurrection, and particularly on account of their being adorned with immortality.

Having thus shown their folly and unbelief, he proceeded to show that they were also ignorant of the Scriptures, and particularly of the writings of Moses, from whence they had drawn their objection, by demonstrating, from the very law itself, the certainty of a resurrection, at least that of just men, and consequently, quite demolished the opinion of the Sadducees, who, by believing the materiality of the soul, affirmed that men were annihilated at their death, and that their opinion was founded on the writings of Moses. "Now," said our Saviour, "that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." Luke xx. 37, 38. Consequently they were not annihilated, as you pretend, but are still in being, and continue to be the servants of the Most High.

This argument effectually silenced the Sadducees, and agreeably surprised the people, to see the objection hitherto thought impregnable totally abolished, and the sect they had long abominated fully confuted. "And

when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine." Matt. xxii. 33.

Nor could even the Pharisees refrain from giving the Saviour of mankind the praise due to his superlative wisdom; for one of the Scribes desired him to give his opinion on a question often debated among their teachers; namely, which was the great commandment of the law? The true reason for their proposing this question, was, to try whether he was as well acquainted with the sacred law, and the debates that had arisen on different parts of it, as he was in deriving arguments from the inspired writers, to destroy the tenets of those who denied a future state.

In order to understand the question proposed to our blessed Saviour by the Scribe, it is necessary to observe, that some of the most learned rabbis had declared, that the law of sacrifice was the great commandment; some that it was the law of circumcision; and others that the law of meats and washings had merited that title.

Our blessed Saviour, however, showed that they were all mistaken; and that the great commandment of the law is the duty of piety: and particularly mentioned that comprehensive summary of it, given by Moses: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment." Mark xii. 29, 30.

The first and chief commandment is, to give God our hearts. The Divine Being is so transcendantly amiable in himself, and hath, by the innumerable benefits conferred upon us, such a title to our utmost affection, that

no obligation bears any proportion to that of loving him. The honor assigned to this precept proves, that piety is the noblest act of the human mind; and that the chief ingredient in piety is love, founded on a clear and extensive view of the divine perfections, a permanent sense of his benefits, and a deep conviction of his being the sovereign good, our portion and our happiness.

Our blessed Saviour having thus answered the question put to him by the Scribe, added that the second commandment was that which enjoined the love of our neighbor.

This had, indeed, no relation to the lawyer's question concerning the first commandment; yet our blessed Lord thought proper to show him which was the second, probably because the men of his sect did not acknowledge the importance and precedency of love to their neighbors, or because they were remarkably deficient in the practice of it, as Jesus himself had often found in their attempts to kill him. "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Without love, a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others only as a sort of merchandize, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our heart to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather on account of God, who is love.

The Scribe was astonished at the justness of our Saviour's decisions, and answered, That he had determined rightly, since there is but one supreme God, whom we must all adore: and if we love him above all temporal things, and our neighbor as ourselves, we wor

ship him more acceptably than if we sacrifice to him "all the cattle upon a thousand hills."

Our blessed Lord highly applauded the piety and wisdom of this reflection, by declaring that the person who made it was not far from the kingdom of God.

As the Pharisees, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, had proposed to him many difficult questions, with intent to prove his prophetic gift, he now, in his turn, thought proper to make a trial of their knowledge in the sacred writings. For this purpose he asked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Messiah's pedigree. "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David." Matt. xxii. 42. I know, answered Jesus, you say Christ is the son of David; but how can they support their opinion, or render it consistent with the words of David, who himself calls him Lord? and "how is he his son?" It seems the Jewish doctors did not imagine that their Messiah would be endowed with any perfections greater than those that might be enjoyed by human nature; for though they called him the Son of God, they had no notion that he had a divine power from heaven, and therefore could not pretend to solve the difficulty.

The latter question, however, might have convinced them of their error. Since, he rules over not only those of former ages, but even over the kings from whom he was himself descended, and his kingdom comprehends the men of all countries and times, past, present, and to come; the doctors, if they had thought accurately upon the subject, should have expected in their Messiah a king different from all other kings. Besides, he is to sit

at God's right hand, "till all his enemies are made his footstool."

Such solid reasoning gave the people a high opinion of his wisdom; and showed them how far superior he was to their most renowned rabbis, whose arguments to prove their opinions, and answers to the objections which were raised against them, were, in general, very weak and trifling. Nay, his foes themselves, from the repeated proofs they had received of the prodigious depth of his understanding, were impressed with such an opinion of his wisdom, that they judged it impossible to entangle him in his talk. Accordingly, they left off attempting it, and from that day forth, troubled him no more with their insidious questions.

The above discourses greatly incensed the Scribes and Pharisees, as they were pronounced in the hearing of many of that order; it is, therefore, no wonder that they watched every opportunity to destroy him. But this was not a time to put their bloody designs in execution; the people set too high a value on his doctrine, to suffer any violence to be offered to his person; and as this was the last sermon he was ever to preach in public, it was necessary that he should use some severity, as all his mild persuasions proved ineffectual.

He therefore denounced, in the most solemn manner, dreadful woes against them, not on account of the personal injuries he had received from them, but on account of their excessive wickedness.

They were public teachers of religion; and therefore should have used every method in their power to recommend its precepts to the people, and to have been themselves shining examples of every duty it enjoined: but,

on the contrary, they abused every mark and character of goodness for all the purposes of villany, and under the cloak of a severe and sanctified aspect, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious. In a word, instead of being reformers, they were the corrupters of mankind, and consequently their wickedness deserved the greatest reproof that could be given by the great Redeemer of mankind. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that were entering to go in. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and, when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt. xxiii. 13, etc.

He added that the divine Being was desirous of trying every method for their conversion, though all these instances of mercy were slighted, and that they must expect such terrible vengeance, as should be a standing monument of the divine displeasure against all the murders committed by the sons of men from the foundation of the world.

Having thus laid before them their heinous guilt and punishment, he was, at the thought of the calamities which were soon to fall upon them, exceedingly moved, and his breast filled with sensations of pity to such a degree, that, unable to contain himself, he broke forth into tears, bewailing the hard lot of the city of Jerusa-

lem: for as its inhabitants had more deeply imbrued their hands in the blood of the prophets, they were to drink more deeply of the punishment due to such crimes. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

By the word "house," our blessed Saviour meant the temple, which was from that time to be left unto them desolate; the glory of the Lord, which Haggai had prophesied should fill the second house, was now departing from it. Adding: "I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matt. xxiii. 39. As if he had said, As ye have killed the prophets, and persecuted me whom the Father hath sent from the courts of heaven, and will shortly put me, who am the Lord of the temple, to death, your holy house shall be left desolate, and your nation totally deserted by me; nor shall you see me any more till ye shall acknowledge the dignity of my character, and the importance of my mission, and say with the whole earth, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Thus did the blessed Jesus strip the Scribes and Pharisees of their hypocritical mask. He treated them with severity, because their crimes were of the blackest dye: and hence we should learn to be really good, and not flatter ourselves that we can cover our crimes, with the cloak of hypocrisy, from that piercing eye from which nothing is concealed.

The people could not fail being astonished at these discourses, as they had always considered their teachers as the most righteous among the sons of men. Nay, the persons themselves, against whom they were levelled, were confounded, because their own consciences convinced them of the truth of every particular laid to their charge. They therefore knew not what course to pursue; and in the midst of their hesitation, they let Jesus depart without making any attempt to seize him, or inflict on him any kind of punishment



CHAPTER XXX.

OUR SAVIOUR COMMENDS EVEN THE SMALLEST ACT PROCEEDING FROM A TRULY BENEVOLENT MOTIVE—PREDICTS THE DEMOLITION OF THE MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM, AND DELIVERS SEVERAL INSTRUCTIVE PARABLES.

JESUS, some time after, repaired with his disciples into the court of the temple, called the treasury, from several chests being fixed to the pillars of the portico surrounding the court, for receiving the offerings of those who came to worship in the temple. While he continued in this court, he “beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them,

Verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." Mark xii. 41, etc.

Though the offering given by this poor widow was in itself very small, yet, in proportion to the goods of life she enjoyed, it was remarkably large; for it was all she had, even all her living. In order, therefore, to encourage charity, and show that it is the disposition of the mind, not the magnificence of the offering, that attaches the regard of the Almighty, the Son of God applauded this poor widow, as having given more in proportion than any of the rich. Their offerings, though great in respect to hers, were but a small part of their estates; whereas her offering was her whole stock. And from this passage of the gospel we should learn that the poor, who in appearance are denied the means of doing charitable offices, are encouraged to do all they can. For, how small soever the gift may be, the Almighty, who beholds the heart, values it, not according to what it is in itself, but according to the disposition with which it is given.

On the other hand, we should learn from hence that it is not enough for the rich that they exceed the poor in gifts of charity: they should bestow in proportion to their income;* and they would do well to remember that a little given, where a little only is left, appears a much nobler offering in the sight of the Almighty, and

* If this be a just rule in raising the national revenue, why is it not equally just as the basis of a man's charities? 1 Cor. xvi. 2; 2 Cor. viii. 13-16. Yet how few observe it!

discovers a more benevolent and humane temper of mind, than sums much larger bestowed out of a plentiful abundance.

The disciples now remembered that their Master, at the conclusion of his pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem,* had declared that the temple should not any more be favored with his presence, till they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." A declaration of this kind could not fail of greatly surprising his disciples; and therefore, as he was departing from the sacred structure, they desired him to observe the beauty of the building, insinuating that they thought it strange that he should intimate an intention of leaving it desolate; that so glorious a fabric, celebrated in every corner of the earth, was not to be deserted rashly; and that they should think themselves supremely happy when he, as the Messiah, and descendant of David, should take possession of it and erect his throne in the midst of Jerusalem. And, as they went out of the temple, one of his disciples said unto him, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

The eastern wall of the temple, which fronted the Mount of Olives, whither the disciples, with their Master, were then retiring, was built, from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height, with stones of an incredible bulk, firmly compacted together, and therefore made a very grand appearance at a distance. The eastern wall is supposed to have been the only remains of Solomon's temple; and had escaped when the Chaldeans burnt it. But this building, however strong or costly it appeared, our Saviour told them should be

* See page 333.

totally destroyed. "Seest thou," said he, "these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Mark xiii. 2. That noble edifice, raised with much labor and at a vast expense, shall be razed to the very foundation.* The disciples, therefore, perceived that the whole temple was to be demolished, but did not suspect that the sacrifices were to be taken away, and a new mode of religion introduced, which (by fulfilling the whole design of the Levitical sacrifices, there offered, in the atonement of Christ) rendered the temple unnecessary. They flattered themselves that the fabric then standing, however glorious it might appear, was too small for the numerous worshippers who would frequent it when all the nations of the world were subject to the Messiah's kingdom, and was, therefore, to be pulled down, in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan, suitable to the idea they had conceived of his future empire. Filled with these pleasing imaginations, they received the news with pleasure, meditating, as they walked to the mountain, on the glorious things which were shortly to come to pass.

When they arrived on the Mount of Olives, and their Master had taken his seat on some eminence, from

* It appears to us rather a strain upon the words of Jesus to apply them to the lower wall or substructure of the temple. Besides this exegetical objection to it, there is a historical one—was the wall ever demolished in fact? To say nothing of the immense arched ways and vaults under the vast area, which still remain, there are in the outer walls of the present area stones of vast size, evidently belonging to the ancient walls. Near the southwest corner, as Dr. Robinson and Dr. Barclay both testify, certain huge stones mark the beginning of an arch, a part of the stately bridge which anciently connected the temple with Mount Zion.

whence they had a prospect of the temple and part of the city, his disciples drew near, to know when the demolition of the old structure was to happen, and what were to be the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"* Matt. xxiv. 3.

* Let the reader remark here, that however closely the idea of the destruction of the temple might be associated in the minds of the disciples with that of the Saviour's second coming, the questions proposed by them are two, and perfectly distinct in their nature. The first is simply a question of *time*, restricted by its terms to the events just foretold: "*When* shall all these things be?" that is, when shall the temple be destroyed? The second is a question of *evidence*: "*What* shall be the sign (evidence) of thy coming and of the end of the world?" It is of great importance to the understanding of the Saviour's answers to keep these questions apart from each other.

Our Lord proceeds at once to reply to the first question, and continues it until it is fully disposed of. Matt. xxiv. 34. The allusion to his second coming in verse 27, is merely cautionary, to distinguish it from all false pretences, by the fact of its all-irradiating splendor. The allusions to it in verses 29-31, are simply in the way of evidence; the judgment on the Jewish state being a sign of Christ being in heaven, and of the certainty and solemnity of his final coming to judgment.

The parable of the fig-tree belongs entirely to the signs of the approaching destruction of the city and sanctuary, which was to fall within the lifetime of the existing generation. But of that greater event, his second coming, when "heaven and earth shall pass away" (verse 35), he says expressly the time shall not be revealed: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Matt. xxiv. 36. The remainder of the discourse turns upon a suitable preparation to meet him, and the holy watchfulness demanded of every generation of men by the uncertainty (as far as we are concerned) of the time.

Experience abundantly proves that all attempts to determine the time of our Lord's second advent have been fruitless and vain. Are they not presumptuous also?

The disciples, by this request, seemed desirous of knowing what signs should precede the erection of that extensive empire over which they supposed the Messiah was to reign; for they still expected he would govern a secular kingdom. They, therefore, connected the demolition of the temple with their Master's coming, though they had not the least notion that he was to destroy the nation and change the form of religious worship. They, therefore, meant by the "end of the world," or, as the words should have been translated, the end of the ages, the period of the political government then executed by the heathen procurators.*

Our blessed Saviour, therefore, was careful to convince them of their mistake, by telling them that he was not come to rule a secular empire, as they supposed, but to punish the Jews for their perfidy and rebellion, by destroying both their temple and nation. "Take heed," said he, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

This caution was far from being unnecessary, because,

* The best key to determine the precise meaning of a writer in the use of a particular word or phrase, is found by comparing all the passages in which he employs it. Now it happens that the original phrase, translated "the end of the world," is used by Matthew three times before, in reporting the language of our Lord. Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 47. There the connection of the words is such as to definitely fix the meaning to the last day, or day of final judgment on all mankind. Why any one can imagine that the very same words are used here in a different meaning, or should have a different rendering, is not obvious on any critical grounds. Indeed, the laws of language forbid it, unless some peculiar and imperative reason requires us to depart from the established signification. But no such reason can be shown. On the contrary, the discourse of our Lord to the end of the next chapter would be unintelligible on any such supposition.

though his disciples were to see their Master ascend into heaven, they might take occasion, from the prophecy, to think that he would appear again on earth, and therefore be in danger of seduction by the false Christs that should arise. “And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars, see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” Before this nation and temple are destroyed, terrible wars will happen in the land: “For nation shall arise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” Matt. xxiv. 7. These are the preludes of the important event, forerunners of the evils which shall befall this nation and people. At the same time, you shall meet with hot persecutions: walk therefore circumspectly, and arm yourselves, both with patience and fortitude, that you may be able to perform your duty through the whole course of these persecutions; for ye shall be brought before the great men of the earth for my sake. “But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” Mark xiii. 11.

During this time of trouble and confusion, he told them, the perfidy of mankind shall be so great toward one another, that “brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.” The unbelieving Jews and apostate Christians shall commit the most enormous and inhuman

crimes. It is therefore no wonder that the perfidy and wickedness of such pretended Christians should discourage many disciples, and greatly hinder the propagation of the gospel. But he who lives by faith, during these persecutions, and is not led away by false Christians, shall escape that terrible destruction which, like a deluge, will overflow the land. And when Jerusalem shall be surrounded with armies, pagan armies, bearing on their standards the images of their gods, the "abomination of desolation" mentioned by the prophet Daniel, then let him who readeth the predictions of that prophet understand that the end of the city and sanctuary, together with the ceasing of sacrifices and oblations there predicted, is come, and consequently the final period of the Jewish polity.* "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out."† Luke xxi. 21. "Let

* The particular prediction of Daniel here referred to, is found in Dan. ix. 26, 27. The original language here differs little from the Greek translation of the Seventy, then in general use.

Not only the temple and the city of Jerusalem were accounted holy by the Jews, but the suburbs for several furlongs beyond. It was on the heights of the surrounding hills that the Roman general, Cestius Gallus, first pitched his army and planted his standards, which, as they contained the Roman eagles and the image of the emperor worshipped by the soldiers, were counted by the Jews as idolatrous ensigns—an "abomination of desolation," or threatening desolation from the heights they occupied.

† It might, at first thought, seem to be too late for Christians to flee from the city after "it was compassed with armies." But we learn from the testimony of Josephus, the Jewish historian, that, although Cestius might then have captured the city, from some cause he suddenly withdrew his army. He adds that as soon as the siege was thus unaccountably abandoned, "many eminent persons fled from the city as from a sinking ship." These persons, in part at least, perhaps wholly, were Christians, who obeyed the prophetic direction of our Lord, and fled

him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Matt. xxiv. 17, 18. Then shall be fulfilled the awful predictions of the prophet Daniel, and the dreadful judgments denounced against the impenitent and unbelieving. In those days of vengeance, the women who are with child, and those who have infants hanging at their breasts, shall be particularly unhappy, because they cannot flee from the impending destruction. "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter," when the badness of the roads and the rigor of the season will render speedy travelling very troublesome, if not impossible; "neither on the Sabbath day," when you shall think it unlawful.* "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be." This is confirmed by what Josephus tells us, that no less than eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege.†

across the Jordan to Pella, a city near the mountains of Gilead, belonging to the jurisdiction of King Agrippa. Here they enjoyed protection for the four years of the terrible Jewish war. Agrippa took part with the Romans, and was therefore friendly to the Christians.

* Christians might not generally regard their flight, at the command of Christ, unlawful; but a few might possibly be thus tempted to call in question the supreme authority of the Lord of the Sabbath. The real danger was that the unbelieving Jews would so regard it, and thus interfere with their flight.

† This immense destruction of human life, in a single siege, is without a parallel in the history of the world. It was made possible only by the activity or strategy of Titus, in investing Jerusalem finally at the time of the Passover, when a great part of the nation had gone up to attend the great national feast; and by the obstinate fury of the parties within the city, neither of whom would consent to any terms of peace with the

The heavenly prophet added that, except the days of tribulation should be shortened, none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, of whom he was speaking, should escape destruction; in confirmation of which Josephus tells us that the quarrels which raged during the siege were so fierce and obstinate that both within the walls of Jerusalem and without in the neighboring country, the whole land was one continued scene of horror and desolation; and, had the siege continued much longer, the whole nation of the Jews had been totally destroyed, according to our Lord's prediction. "But," added our blessed Saviour, "for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." By the elect are meant such of the Jews as had embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and particularly those who were brought in with the believing Gentiles.*

As it is natural, in time of trouble, to look with eager expectation for a deliverer, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples not to listen to any pretences of that kind, as many false Christs would arise and deceive great numbers of the people—a prediction that was fully accomplished during the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans; so Josephus tells us that many arose, pretending to be the Messiah, boasting that they would deliver the nation from all its enemies. And the multitude, always too prone to listen to deceivers who promise temporal advantages, giving credit to those deceivers,

Romans, while they were daily murdering one another. Add to these causes the false hopes of deliverance by the Messiah, with which they were deluded to the last.

* This is true, no doubt. But if we turn to Romans xi. a further and grander sense opens before us. See especially verses 23-36.

became more obstinate in their opposition to the Romans, and thereby rendered their destruction more severe and inevitable. And what still increased the infatuation of the people was their performing wonderful things during the war; and, accordingly, Josephus calls them magicians and sorcerers. Hence we see the propriety of the caution given by the Son of God, who foretold that "they should show great signs and wonders, inasmuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. But take heed; behold, I have foretold you all things." And, as the partisans of the false Christ might pretend that the Messiah was concealed awhile for fear of the Romans, and the weaker sort of Christians, without this warning, have imagined that Christ was actually returned to deliver the nation in its extremity, and to punish their enemies, who now so cruelly oppressed them, and that he would show himself as soon as it was proper, the blessed Jesus thought proper to caution them against this particular: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matt. xxiv. 26, etc. The coming of the Son of man shall be like lightning, swift and destructive.* But he will not come personally: his servants only shall come, the Roman

* It is not the swiftness and destructiveness of the lightning on which our Lord fixes the attention here, so much as its sudden, universal splendor. He will come, not locally and obscurely, but in a blaze of glory which shall fill the world, and leave no possible doubt of his appearing Rev. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

armies, who by his command shall destroy this nation, as eagles devour their prey.

Having thus given them a particular account of the various circumstances which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, he next described that catastrophe itself, in all the pomp of language and imagery made use of by the ancient prophets when they foretold the destruction of cities and kingdoms. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." Mark xiii. 24. "And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke xxi. 25, 26.

Whoever shall compare the prediction of our Saviour with the history Josephus wrote of the war cannot fail of being struck with the wisdom of Christ, and acknowledge that his prediction was truly divine; for, as the Jewish nation was at this time in the most flourishing state, the event here foretold appeared altogether improbable.* Besides, the circumstances of the destruction

* Palestine, according to the estimate of Prof. Wines, was capable, under favorable circumstances, of supporting in comfort a population of more than 40,000,000 (forty millions) of souls. In the times of the Kings, if we may judge from the armies of Jehoshaphat and Ahab (2 Chron. xiv.), the population must have been ten or twelve millions.

From the descriptions of Josephus, we can hardly doubt that the country, in the time of Christ and his apostles, had reached a density of population, and a height of wealth, culture, and beauty, never before attained. That height was the measure of its fall.

Had it only received, instead of despising and rejecting Jesus, how dif-

are very numerous and surprisingly great, and the whole delivered without any ambiguity. It is, therefore, a prophecy of such a kind as could never have been uttered by any impostor, and consequently the person who delivered it was acquainted with the secret counsels of heaven, and was truly divine.

It was natural also, as men were to undergo at the destruction of Jerusalem nearly the same miseries, and as the passions which its approach would raise in their minds were similar to those which will happen at the destruction of the world, it is natural I say for our blessed Saviour on this occasion, to put his disciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful discharge of their duty from the consideration of the suddenness of his coming to call every individual to account after death. "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matt. xxiv. 34.

The striking representations of the last judgment he has here given must greatly tend to rouse the consciences of men from their lethargy, and consider, before it be too late, "the things which belong to their peace."

Then shall the kingdom of heaven, the gospel kingdom, in the last dispensation of it, when the kingdom of grace is going to be swallowed up in the kingdom of glory, "be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." They

ferent might have been its destiny! "If thou hadst known, even thou—at least in this thy day—the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes!"

that were foolish took their lamps, but the wise put oil in their vessels ; knowing that it was uncertain when the bridegroom would arrive, and that they might in all probability wait long for his coming. Nor were they mistaken ; for the bridegroom did not come so soon as they expected. “ While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a great cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so ; lest there be not enough for us and you ; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.” Matt. xxv. 6, etc.

In order to understand this parable, we must remember that it alludes to the custom of the Eastern people. It was usual with them for the bridegroom to bring his bride home in the evening, sooner or later, as the circumstances might happen ; and, that they might be received properly at his house, his female acquaintances, especially those of the younger sort, were invited to come and wait with lamps till some of his retinue, despatched before the rest, informed them that he was near at hand ; upon which they trimmed their lamps, went forth to welcome him, and conduct him,

with his bride, into the house; for which they were honored as guests at the marriage feast, and shared in the usual festivities. To ten such virgins our blessed Saviour compares those to whom the gospel is preached; because this was the general number appointed to wait on the bridegroom: and to these all Christian professors may be likened, who, taking their lamp of Christian profession, go forth to meet the bridegroom; that is, consider themselves candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and desire to be admitted, with Christ, the celestial Bridegroom, into the happy mansions of immortality.

We must remember that there always was, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad in the church, till the great day of separation arrives. The weakness of the foolish is represented by their taking no oil in their vessels, with their lamps; that is, the foolish professors content themselves with the bare lamp of profession, and never think of furnishing it with the oil of divine grace, the fruit of which is a life of holiness. Whereas, the wise, well knowing that a lamp without the supply of oil would be speedily extinguished—that a faith without love or holiness will be of no consequence—take care to secure a supply for themselves of the divine grace, and to display in their lives the works of love and charity. While those virgins, though differently supplied, waiting the coming of the bridegroom, all slumbered and slept; that is, as some think, all Christians, both good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrite, lie down together in the sleep of death, and, while the bridegroom delays his coming, slumber in the chambers of the dust. But others suppose that this

argues the want of vigilance and care, even in the wise as well as foolish; that few, if any, are as attentive as they ought to be to the coming of the Lord.

The Jews have a tradition that Christ's coming to judgment will be at midnight; which agrees with that particular in the parable, "At midnight there was a cry made, Go ye out to meet him." But, however this be, whether he will come at midnight or in the morning, it will be awfully sudden and alarming. The great cry will be heard to the end of the earth; the trumpet shall sound, and the mighty archangel's voice pierce even the bowels of the earth and the depths of the ocean: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him." The graves, both earthly and watery, must surrender their tenants, and all will then begin to think how they may prepare themselves to find admittance to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." But the foolish soon perceived their folly: their lamps were gone out, totally extinguished, and they had no oil to support the flame. In like manner the hypocrite's hope shall perish. But the wise were in much happier condition: they had oil in their vessels, sufficient for themselves, but none to spare; for when the foolish virgins would have procured some from them they denied their request, fearing there would not be enough for both.

There are here beautifully represented nominal and sincere Christians. The former, having only the bare lamp of a profession, and who have not been solicitous to gain the oil of divine grace by a constant use of the means assigned, will fare like the foolish virgins; while the latter, whose hearts are filled with divine oil, will,

like the wise virgins, enter into the joy of the Lord. But the foolish, going to purchase oil, missed the bridegroom, and, behold, "the door was shut." They at last, however, reached the gate, and, with great importunity, cried, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." But he answered and said, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." As you denied me on earth, I deny you now : depart from me ; I know you not. How justly, therefore, did our blessed Saviour bid us all watch, that we may be found ready whenever he cometh, or commands by the king of terrors our attendance before his judgment-seat ! Let us not refuse this kind invitation of being constantly prepared to meet the heavenly Bridegroom ; let us get our lamps filled with oil, that we may be ready to follow our great Master into the happy mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

But, as this duty was of the utmost importance, our blessed Saviour, to show us more clearly the nature and use of Christian watchfulness, to which he exhorts us at the conclusion of the parable of the Ten Virgins, added another, wherein he represented the different characters of a faithful and slothful servant, and the difference of their future acceptance. This parable, like the former, is intended to stir us up to a zealous preparation for the coming of our Lord, by diligence in the discharge of our duty and by a careful improvement of our souls in holiness, and, at the same time, to expose the vain pretences of hypocrites, and to demonstrate that their fair speeches and outward forms, without the power of godliness, will be of no service whatever in the last day of account.

The Son of man, said he, may, with respect to his

final coming to judge the world, be likened unto “a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every one according to his several ability;* and straightway took his journey.” Immediately, on his master’s departure, he who had received the five talents lost no time, but traded with the same; and his increase was equal to his industry and application: he made them other five talents. He that received two talents did the same, and had equal success. But he that received one, very unlike the conduct of his fellow-servants, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money, idle, useless, unemployed, and unimproved. After a long time, and at an hour when they did not expect it, the lord of those servants returned, called them before him, and ordered them to give an account of their several trusts. Upon which, he that had received five talents, as a proof of his fidelity, produced other five talents, saying, “Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more.” Matt. xxv. 20. His lord, highly applauding his industry and fidelity, said to him, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” Matt. xxv. 21.

In like manner, also, he that had received two talents declared he had gained two others; upon which he was honored with the same applause, and admitted into the

* The talents here do not denote native abilities (from which they are distinguished), but the manifold means and opportunities of religious improvement and usefulness.

same joy with his fellow-servant—their master having regard to the industry and fidelity of his servants, not to the number of the talents only, but the greatness of their increase.

After this, he that had received the one talent came, and, with a shameful falsehood, to excuse his vile indolence, said, “Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.” Matt. xxv. 24, 25. The perversion of even the smallest portion of his gifts greatly excited the resentment of his lord, who answered, “Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed! thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.* And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. xxv. 26, etc.

Such is the parable of the Talents, as delivered by our blessed Saviour—a parable containing the measures of our duty to God, and the motives which enforce it, all delivered in the plainest and simplest manner. But its views are so extensive and affecting, that while it instructs the meanest capacity, it engages reverence and

* The precious means and opportunities he has so wretchedly abused.

attention from the greatest, and strikes an impression on the most improved understanding. We are to consider God as our Lord and Master, the Author and Giver of every good gift, and ourselves as his servants or stewards, who, in various instances and measures, have received from his goodness such blessings and abilities as may fit us for the several stations and offices of life to which his providence may appoint us. But then we are to observe that these are committed to us as a trust or loan, for whose due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourselves of this probationary charge, we shall receive far greater instances of God's regard and favor; but if we are remiss and negligent we must expect to feel his resentment and displeasure. A time will come, and how near it may be none of us can tell, when our great Master will demand a particular account of every talent he hath committed to our care. This time may, indeed, be at a distance; for it is uncertain when the king of terrors will receive the awful warrant to terminate our existence here below, yet it will certainly come, and our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it; so that we should all have it continually in our thoughts, and engraven, as with the point of a diamond, on the tables of our hearts.

We learn farther from this instructive parable that Infinite Wisdom hath intrusted men with different talents, and adjusted them to the various purposes of human life. But, though the gifts of men are unequal, none can with justice complain; since whatever is bestowed, be it more or less, is a favor entirely unmerited. Each then should be thankful, and satisfied with his

portion, and, instead of envying the more liberal endowments of others, apply himself to the improvement of his own. And it should be observed that the difficulty of the task is in proportion to the number of talents committed to each. He who had received five was to gain other five; and he who had received two was to account for other two. Surely, then, we have no reason to complain if our Master has laid on us a lighter burden, a more easy and less service, than he has on others; especially as our interest in the favor of the Almighty does not depend on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them; so that the moral design of this parable is, to engage our utmost attention to improve such talents as our heavenly Father hath thought proper to bestow upon us.

Our blessed Lord closes his discourse, not by another parable, but by a solemn picture of the last judgment, with its everlasting issues. "When the Son of Man," said he, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Matt. xxv. 31. It is common, in the Old Testament, to compare good men to sheep, on account of their innocence and usefulness; and wicked men to goats, for their exorbitant lusts. Our blessed Saviour, however, does not pursue the allegory farther, but describes the remaining, and indeed the greatest part of

this awful scene, in terms perfectly simple: so that though the sense be profound, it is obvious.

Here the judgment of all nations, Gentiles as well as Christians, is exhibited: and the particulars on which these awful trials are to proceed displayed by the great Judge himself.

Here we learn, that we shall be condemned or acquitted, according as we have neglected or performed works of charity; works which flow from the great principles of faith and piety. But we must not understand that such works merited this favor from the Judge; no, all who are accepted at that day, whether heathens or Christians, shall be accepted solely on account of the righteousness of Christ, the true, the only meritorious cause.

“Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Matt. xxv. 34, etc.

They, enraptured and amazed, shall then ask, with great reverence and humility, when they performed these services? as they never saw him in want, and therefore could not assist him. “Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say

unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv. 37, etc. This is truly astonishing! The united wisdom of men and angels could never have discovered a more proper method to convey an idea of the warmth and force of the divine benevolence to the sons of men, or offer a more forcible motive to charity, than that the Son of God should, from his seat of judgment, in presence of the whole race of mankind, and all the hosts of blessed spirits from the courts of heaven, declare that all good offices done to the afflicted, for his sake, are done to himself.

During the time of his dwelling with human nature in this vale of tears, he suffered unspeakable injuries and afflictions: and, therefore, considers all the distressed virtuous as members of his body, loves them with the utmost tenderness, and is so greatly interested in their welfare, that he rejoices when they are happy, and grieves when they are distressed.

Perhaps the true reason why the grand inquiry shall rest solely on the performance of our Christian duties is, that men, generally speaking, consider the neglect of those duties as a matter of no great consequence, but dread the commission of crimes. And hence it happens, that while they keep themselves free from the latter, they easily find excuses for the former. And as there is not a more pernicious error, with regard to religion and morality, than this, the blessed Jesus thought proper to give such an account of the judgment as should prove the most solemn caution against it.

The work of charity may, indeed, in some particular cases, flow from other principles than those of a pious

and benevolent disposition, as from vanity, or even views of interest; but then it should be remembered, that a common degree of hypocrisy will hardly engage men to undertake them; they are by far too weighty duties to be sustained by those false principles, and, therefore, are seldom counterfeited. Consequently, wherever a genuine, extensive, and permanent charity is found, we may conclude, that there the love of God reigns.

Hence we learn that all pretences to goodness, without a principle of grace wrought in the heart, avail nothing in point of eternal salvation. At the same time, if we consider it in its full light, it will give us no reason to think well of ourselves, if we are wanting in our duty to God; and that we should not only be charitable, but grateful also, just, temperate, and blameless in all our dealings with mankind.

Since the duty we owe to God is the same in kind with that we owe to man in like circumstances, it will undeniably follow, that true morality can never exist where piety is wanting; and that those who pretend to morality, and are destitute of piety, render themselves ridiculous.

The awful Judge himself has told us, that after he has passed the happy sentence on the righteous, he will pronounce the following sentence of condemnation upon the wicked: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hun-

gered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Matt. xxv. 41, etc.

It is remarkable, that our blessed Saviour has told us, that the original design of Omnipotence was to render man happy, not miserable; a state of consummate felicity was formed for the human race, at the time they were created; but the fire of hell was prepared for the devil and his angels immediately after their fall. And as wicked men joined with devils in their sin of rebellion against the Almighty, they are doomed to share with them in their punishment: a punishment of the heaviest kind; a punishment of devils.

After having represented the sentences that are to be passed on the righteous and the wicked, our Saviour closed the scene in the following manner: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46.

Happy decision to the followers of the Lamb! awful sentence to the workers of iniquity! may it excite us to pray for that grace by which alone we shall obtain the former!

CHAPTER XXXI.

OUR BLESSED LORD IS ANOINTED BY A POOR BUT PIOUS WOMAN—THE PERFIDIOUS JUDAS CONSENTS TO BETRAY HIS MASTER—THE HUMBLE JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES, AND FORETELLS THAT DISCIPLE WHO WAS TO BETRAY HIM INTO THE HANDS OF HIS INVETERATE ENEMIES.

WHEN our blessed Saviour had finished these discourses, he added a short account of his own death, in order to fortify his disciples against a greater trial than they had yet met with; namely, the sufferings of their Master. “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

“Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, into the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.” Matt. xxvi. 1, etc.

The blessed Jesus used frequently to retire in the evening from the city to the Mount of Olives, and there spend the night, in some village or the gardens, either to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies, or for the sake of a little retirement. They did not, indeed, presume to attack him while he was surrounded by his followers in the daytime; but, in all probability, had he lodged within the city, they would have apprehended him during the darkness and silence of the night.

When the evening approached, our blessed Saviour, with his disciples, repaired to Bethany, and entered the house of Simon the leper—probably one who experienced the healing efficacy of his power. But, while he sat at meat, a woman,* who had also, doubtless, been an object of his mercy, came and poured a box of precious ointment upon his head. This action displeased the disciples, who knew that their Master was not delighted with luxuries of any kind; and therefore they rebuked the woman, imagining that it would have been more acceptable to the Son of God if the ointment had been sold and the money distributed among the sons and daughters of poverty and affliction. To reprove the disciples, Jesus told them that it had pleased the Divine Providence to order that there should always be persons in necessitous circumstances, that the righteous might never want occasions for exercising their charity; but that those who did not testify their love to him would nevermore have the opportunity of doing it, as the time of his ministry was near its period, when the king of

* As this woman is declared expressly to be no other than Mary the sister of Lazarus (John xi. 2; xii. 5), and as the act was the overflowing of her grateful love for the recent resurrection of her brother, it seems proper to give her name. In the impassioned ardor of her feelings, no offering less costly would have satisfied her soul; and it is worthy of remark, that while the other evangelists mention only the anointing of the Saviour's head, John adds, that she anointed his feet also, and wiped them with the hair of her head.

There is doubtless room for discretion and choice in our ordinary modes of testifying our love to the Redeemer; but this case brooked no delay, and from the language of Jesus on this occasion, we learn that nothing is really wasted which is devoted to his glory, and is the outgushing of a heart penetrated with gratitude for his mercies. Cold criticism, in such a case, is as much out of season as snow in harvest.

terrors should enjoy a short triumph over his body; and therefore this woman had seasonably anointed him for his burial. And, to make them sensible of their folly in blaming the woman for this expression of love to him, he assured them that she should be highly esteemed for this action in every part of the world, and her memory live to the latest period of time.

Judas Iscariot (one of the twelve, having been more forward than the rest in condemning the woman, thought the rebuke was particularly directed to him), stung with the guilt of his own conscience, arose from the table, and went immediately into the city, to the high priest's palace, where he found the whole Council assembled. His passion would not suffer him to reflect on the horrid deed he was going to commit: he immediately promised, for the reward of thirty pieces of silver, to betray into their hands his Lord and Master. Having thus engaged with the rulers of Israel to put into their hands a person who had often invited them, in the most pathetic manner, to embrace the gracious terms of the gospel offered by the Almighty, he sought an opportunity to betray him in the absence of the multitude.

Our Lord, who well knew that the time of his suffering drew nigh, desired, therefore, to celebrate the passover with his disciples. He was now going to finish the mighty work for which he came into the world, and therefore would not neglect to fulfil the smallest particular of the law of Moses. He therefore sent two of his disciples into the city to prepare a lamb and make it ready for eating the passover; telling them that they should meet a man, bearing a pitcher of water, who

would conduct them to his house and show them a large upper room, furnished, where they were to make ready for him. He was willing, in this last transaction, to convince his disciples that he knew every thing that should befall him; that his sufferings were all foretold by the Almighty; and that they were all, on his own part, submitted unto voluntarily.

When night approached, Jesus left Bethany, and, every thing being ready for him at the time he entered into the city, he sat down at the appointed hour. He told his disciples, in the most affectionate manner, that he had greatly longed to eat the passover with them before he suffered, in order to show them the strongest proofs of his love. These proofs were to give them a pattern of humility and love, by washing their feet; instructing them in the nature of his death, as a propitiatory sacrifice; instituting the sacrament, in commemoration of his sufferings; comforting them by the tender discourses recorded in John xiv., xv., xvi., in which he gave them a variety of excellent directions, together with many gracious promises; and recommending them to the kind protection of his heavenly Father. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

* In the kingdom of God, of which Jesus here speaks, a redemption is accomplished for us, of which the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was a striking type. "For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," and through the sprinkling of his blood we are saved, while others perish under the avenging stroke of the angel of doom. 1 Cor. v. 7; 1 Thess. v. 9. 10. The removal of all leaven shadowed forth the putting away of all sin by repentance, and the eating of the sacrifice foretokened the appropriation of his great atonement by a living faith.

Having thus spoken, he rose from the table, laid aside his garments, like a servant, and washed the feet of his disciples without distinction, though one of them, Judas Iscariot, was a monster of impiety—that they might at once behold a conjunction of love and humility, of self-denial and beneficence—represented by a person glorious beyond expression, their great Lord and Master. He washed their feet (according to a custom which prevailed in those hot countries), in order to show them an example of the utmost humility and condescension.* The omnipotent Son of the Father lays every thing aside, that he may serve his followers; heaven stoops to earth, one abyss calls upon another, and the miseries of man, which were almost infinite, are exceeded by a mercy equal to the immensity of the

* There can be no question among Christians that this act of Christ was in the highest degree *exemplary*. The only question is, whether it was also *institutional*, as in the case of the Lord's Supper. On this it may be noticed—1. That in the case of the Lord's Supper, its institution is afterward explicitly affirmed, and its observance by Christian churches repeatedly recorded. Acts ii. 42; xx. 7; 1 Cor. x. 21; xi. 23–34. Now, nothing of this sort is recorded of the public washing of feet. 2. Washing the feet of guests was a custom of private hospitality—dating from the earliest times. Abraham practiced it. Gen. xviii. 4. The ground of it was the fact that in eastern travelling, the feet were usually protected only by sandals, and hence required washing, both for the sake of cleanliness and of grateful coolness. It was usually done by servants, and considered a menial office. 1 Sam. xxv. 41. This service was therefore regarded as a special favor or condescension to the guests, when performed by the master or mistress of a family. Now the only mention of the practice among Christians in the New Testament is just in this way, as an act of private hospitality. 1 Tim. v. 10. It is classed with other “good works” of a domestic and social character, which render an aged widow worthy of the confidence and support of the church. Had the practice been public as an institution, could it have been mentioned in this way?

Almighty. He deferred this ceremony, which was a customary civility paid to honorable strangers at the beginning of their feast, that it might be preparatory to the second, which he intended should be a feast to the whole world, when all the followers of the blessed Jesus should have an opportunity, in a spiritual manner, of feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood.

When our blessed Saviour came to Peter, he modestly declined it; but his Master told him if he refused to submit implicitly to all orders he could have no part with him. On which Peter cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But Jesus told him that the person washed had no reason to wash any part of the body except the feet, which he might have dirtied by walking from the bath, adding, "Ye are all clean as to the outward laver, but not all as to the inward and spiritual laver: for I well know that one of you will betray me."

When our gracious Lord had finished this menial service, he asked his disciples if they knew the meaning of what he had done, as the action was purely emblematical. You truly, added he, style me Master and Lord; for I am the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. But if I, your Master and your Lord, have condescended to wash your feet, you surely ought to perform, with the utmost pleasure, the humblest offices of love to one another. I have set you a pattern of humility, and I recommend it to you.

And certainly nothing can more effectually show us the necessity of this heavenly temper of mind than its being recommended to us by so great an example—a recommendation which in the present circumstances

was particularly reasonable; for, the disciples having heard their great Master declare that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, their minds were filled with ambitious thoughts. And therefore our blessed Saviour added, Ye need not be ashamed to follow my example, in this particular; for no servant can think it beneath him to condescend to perform those actions his Lord has done before him. And, therefore, if he knows his duty, he will be happy if he practices it. He, moreover, added, that though he had called them all to the apostleship, and knew the secret dispositions of every heart before he chose them, they need not be surprised that one among them should prove a traitor, as thereby the Scripture would be fulfilled: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

Soon after Jesus had spoken these things, his heart was greatly troubled to think that one of his disciples should prove his enemy; he complained of it at the table, declaring that one of them should betray him. This moving declaration greatly affected the disciples; and they began every one of them to say to their Master, "Lord, is it I?" But, Jesus giving them no decisive answer, John, the beloved disciple, whose sweet disposition, with other amiable qualities, is perpetuated in the peculiar love his great Master bore him, and was now reclining on his bosom, asked him who among the disciples could be guilty of so detestable a crime. Jesus told him that the person to whom he should give the sop, when he had dipped it, was he who should betray him. Accordingly, as soon as he had dipped the sop in the dish, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, saying to him, at the same time, "That thou doest, do quickly."

Judas received the sop, without knowing any thing of what his Master had told the beloved disciple; nor did any of the disciples, except John, entertain the least suspicion that Judas was the person who would betray their Master.

Jesus further declared that his death should be brought about according to the decrees of Heaven, though that would not in the least mitigate the crime of the person who betrayed him; adding, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born."

As various conjectures have been formed concerning the motives which induced the perfidious Judas cruelly to deliver up his innocent Master into the hands of his enemies, it may not be improper to cite those which appear to be most probable, though the decision must be entirely left to the reader.*

Some are of opinion that he was induced to commit this villany by the resentment of the rebuke given him by his Master for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment and anointed the head of Jesus as he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper. But though this had, doubtless, its weight with the traitor, yet it could not, I think, be his only motive; because the rebuke was given in general to all the disciples,

* We think our author, in his treatment of this question, has furnished a good example of what is called "comprehensive interpretation," as all the motives separately specified probably had influence on the mind of Judas. In the history of this man, so highly favored, so fully enlightened, so richly endowed with apostolic gifts, so intimately acquainted with the divine excellencies of Jesus, we may see the absolute need of regenerating grace to turn religious advantages to a right use, and that there is, in the striking language of Bunyan, "a way to hell right by the door to heaven."

who had certainly been forward with him in censuring the woman. Nor can we imagine, even if he had been rebuked alone, that so mild a reproof could provoke any person, however wicked, to the horrid act of murdering his friend—much less Judas, whose covetous disposition must have disposed him to bear every thing from his Master, from whom he expected the highest preferment if he should openly declare himself the Messiah and take the reins of government into his own hands.

Others think that Judas betrayed his Master through mere covetousness. But, if we understand by covetousness the reward given by the priests, this opinion is equally defective; for the sum was too small for the most sordid wretch to think equivalent to the life of a friend, especially when he expected from him the highest posts and advantages.

Others attribute the perfidy of Judas to his doubting whether his Master was the Messiah, and that he betrayed him in a fit of despair. But of all the solutions this is the worst founded. For, if Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, he must have observed something in his behavior which led him to form such an opinion of him; and in that case he would doubtless have mentioned it to the chief priests and elders when he made the contract with them; which it is plain he did not, as they would have reminded him of it when he came back and expressed his remorse for what he had done.

In fine, the supposition that Judas believed his Master to be an impostor is directly confuted by the solemn declaration he made to the priests, when he

declared the deepest conviction of the innocence of our great Redeemer: "I have sinned," says he, "in betraying innocent blood."

A more comprehensive view of the case is therefore necessary. Judas probably acted from a mixture of motives.

The evangelist, St. John, tells us that he was of so covetous a disposition, as to steal money out of our Lord's bag; and hence we have sufficient reason to believe, that he first followed Jesus with a view of obtaining riches, and other temporal advantages, which he expected the Messiah's friends would enjoy. It likewise authorizes us to think that as he had hitherto reaped none of these advantages, he might grow impatient under the delay; and the rather, as Jesus had lately discouraged all ambitious views among his disciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting that kingdom which was offered him by the multitude, who accompanied him into Jerusalem with shouts, and crying, Hosanna to the Son of David. His impatience, therefore, becoming excessive, suggested to him the thought of delivering his Master into the hands of the council; firmly persuaded that he would then be obliged to assume the dignity of the Messiah, and consequently be able to reward his followers. For as this court was composed of the chief priests, elders, and scribes, that is, the principal persons of the sacerdotal order, the representatives of the great families, and the doctors of the law; the traitor did not doubt that his Master, when brought before so august an assembly, would assert his pretensions to the title of Messiah, prove his claim to their full conviction, gain them over

to his interest, and immediately enter into his regal dignity. And though he must be sensible that the measures he took to compass his intention were very offensive to his Master, yet he might think the success of it would procure his pardon from so compassionate a Master, and even recommend him to favor. In the meantime, his project, however plausible it may appear to one of his turn, was far from being free from difficulty: and therefore, while he revolved it in his own mind, many things might occur to stagger his resolution. At length, thinking himself affronted by the rebuke of Jesus, at the time when the woman anointed the head of his Master, he was provoked to execute the resolution he had formed of obliging him to alter his measures.

Therefore he went immediately into the city, to the palace of the high priest, where he found the council assembled, consulting how they might take Jesus by subtlety, in the absence of the multitude. To them he made known his intention of delivering his Master into their hands; and undertook, for a small sum of money, to conduct a band of armed men to the place where the Saviour of the world usually spent the night with the disciples, where they might apprehend him without the least danger of a tumult.

He knew him to be thoroughly innocent, and expected that he would have wrought such miracles before the council as should have constrained them to believe. Therefore, when he found that nothing of this kind was done, and that the priests had passed the sentence of condemnation upon him, and were carrying him to the governor to get it executed, he repented of his rash and covetous project, came to the chief priests

and elders, the persons to whom he had betrayed him, offered them their money again, and solemnly declared the deepest conviction of his Master's innocence, hoping that they would have desisted from the persecution. But they were obstinate, and would not relent; upon which his remorse rose to such a pitch, that, unable to support the torments of his conscience, he went and hanged himself.

CHAPTER XXXII.

JESUS INSTITUTES THE SACRAMENT IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS DEATH AND SUFFERINGS—SETTLES A DISPUTE WHICH AROSE AMONG HIS DISCIPLES—PREDICTS PETER'S COWARDICE IN DENYING HIS MASTER—FORTIFIES HIS DISCIPLES AGAINST THE APPROACHING SHOCK—FORETELLS PETER'S COWARDICE AGAIN—PREACHES TO, AND PRAYS WITH HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE LAST TIME—PASSIONATE ADDRESS OF OUR LORD TO HIS FATHER IN THE GARDEN.

THE Great Redeemer, ever mindful of the grand design of his mission, even the salvation of lost and perishing sinners, was not in the least affected by the treachery of his apostate disciple; for, knowing that he must become a sacrifice for our sin, he instituted the sacrament of his Supper, to perpetuate the memory of it through all ages. Accordingly, as they were eating the paschal supper, "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take,

eat this is my body." Matt. xxvi. 26. Observe this rite no longer in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt,* but in remembrance of me, who, by dying for you, will bring you out of the spiritual bondage—a bondage far worse than the Egyptian under which your fathers groaned—and will establish you in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Do it in remembrance of me, who, by laying down my life, will ransom you from sin, from death, from hell, and will set open the gates of heaven to you, that you may enter immortality in triumph.

Having given the bread to his disciples, he also took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. xxvi. 27, 28.

All of you, and all of my disciples, in all ages, must drink of this cup, because it represents my blood shed for the remission of the sins of mankind; my blood, by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified. It is, therefore, my blood of the new covenant, so that this institution exhibits to your joyful meditation

* The language of Jesus is here improperly made to refer to the Passover, as if Christians were still to observe that feast only in new relations to Christ. But that feast was about to be "fulfilled in the kingdom of God," and its end being fulfilled, like the rest of the shadows of Judaism, "it vanished away." It was never enjoined on Christians as such, and its attempted enforcement in the churches of the second century, first rent the unity of the Christian body. The Lord's Supper is altogether a distinct institution, and not, like the Passover, limited in its observance to a certain portion of the year. When Jesus said, "Do *this* in remembrance of me," the connexion of his words determines their reference to the Lord's Supper alone, which was then instituted for all future time. 1 Cor. ii. 26

the grand basis of the hopes of the children of men, and perpetuates the memory of it to the end of the world. He added, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Matt. xxvi. 29.

The manifestation of the Son of God is the most illustrious, the most momentous event that is possible to engage the meditations of men. To his life and death, his resurrection and ascension into glory, we are indebted for our hopes and assurances of pardon, for our peace and happiness. To procure our salvation, he made the most amazing condescension from the dignity he enjoyed with his Father, by putting on the vail of flesh; he poured divine instruction from his lips, and shone forth with an all-perfect and all-lovely example. For our benefit, he submitted to a course of the most cruel treatment from his bitter enemies, to the agonies of the cross, and to the stroke of the king of terrors. For our happiness, he arose again with power and lustre, ascended into the mansions of eternal happiness, manages our affairs with the Father, and holds the reins of government. With the greatest wisdom and goodness, the beneficent Jesus instituted a rite that should recall his love to our memories and awake each pious passion in our breast; a rite which, by the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine, should represent to us, in a striking manner, that most signal proof of the affection both of him and his heavenly Father, when his tender frame was exposed to wounds and bruises, when streams of the most precious blood issued from his sacred veins.

The important, the awful scene now approached

when the great work was to be finished. The traitor Judas was gone to the chief priests and elders, for a band of soldiers to apprehend him; but this did not discompose the Redeemer of mankind: he took occasion to meditate on the glory that would accrue both to himself and his Almighty Father from those sufferings, and spake of it to his disciples. "Now," said he, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He told them that, having already done honor to his Father by the past actions of his life, and being about to honor him still further by his sufferings and death, which would display his perfections, particularly his infinite love to the human race, in the most astonishing and amiable light, he was, in his turn, to receive honor from his Father; intimating that his human nature was to be exalted to the right hand of Omnipotence, and that his mission from God was to be supported by irrefragable attestations.

But, his disciples imagining that he spake of the glory of a temporal kingdom, their ambition was again revived, and they began to dispute, with as much keenness as ever, which of them should be greatest in that kingdom. This contention Jesus suppressed by the arguments he had formerly used for the same purpose. Among the Gentiles, said he, they are reckoned the greatest who have the greatest power, and have exercised it in the most absolute manner; but your greatness shall be very different from theirs: it shall not consist in being unlimited with regard to tyrannical power, even though it should be joined with an affectation of titles, which denote qualities truly honorable; but whosoever desires to be great, or chief, among you, let him

be so by his humility, and the service he renders to the rest, in imitation of me, your Master, whose greatness consists in this, that I am become the servant of you all: adding, that as they had continued with him in his temptation, he would bestow upon them such a kingdom as his Father had appointed for him. At the same time, to check their ambition, and lead them to form a just notion of his kingdom, he told them that he was soon to leave them, and that whither he was going they could not at that time follow him; for which reason, instead of contending with one another which of them should be greatest, they would do well to be united among themselves in the happy bond of love. For by loving one another sincerely and fervently they would prove themselves his disciples, to the conviction of mankind, who could not be ignorant that love was a distinguishing part of his character.

This is termed a new commandment, not because mutual love had never been enjoined to mankind before, but because they were to exercise it under a new relation, according to a new measure, and from new motives. They were to love one another, in the relation of his disciples, and in that degree of love which he had showed to them; for they were to lay down their lives for their brethren.*

This excellent doctrine, however, did not make such

* The nature of brotherly love makes it truly and literally "a new commandment." It is by no means the same thing as the universal love of our neighbor enjoined in the moral law. It is something quite distinct from that, and beyond it, as it must recognize Christian character as its peculiar object, and can have no existence except among those who have been born of the Spirit. 1 John iii. 14.

an impression on Peter, as the words which Jesus had spoken concerning a place whither his disciples could not come. He therefore replied by asking where he was going. To which Jesus answered, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward."

In order to make his disciples farther humble, watchful, and kindly affectionate one toward another, he assured them that Satan was seeking to ruin them all by his temptations: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."* Peter was greatly offended that his Master should have singled him out as the weakest; for so he interpreted his praying for him particularly; and supposing that he mentioned Satan's seeking to sift him, as the thing which would hinder him from following his Master, replied, Why cannot I follow thee now? Is there any road more terrible than the dark valley of the shadow of death? Yet through these black and gloomy shades I am willing this moment to accompany thee.

Jesus knowing his weak, though sincere resolution, answered, Art thou so very confident of thine own strength? I tell thee that this very night, before the cock crows, thou shalt thrice deny me to be thy Master.

* In this case the word "converted" has the meaning of restored. Indeed such a recovery as that of Peter involved all the elements of grace exercised in his original conversion from sin to God, except one. There was in Peter, even in his aggravated sin, a root of living faith, which, through the prayer of Jesus was preserved from total failure, and which sprang up with new vigor in the confidence of his Saviour's forgiving love. A restored and pardoned backslider cannot do too much to strengthen his brethren, for he speaks from the depths of his own bitter experience.

Our blessed Saviour having finished what he had to say to Peter in particular, turned himself to his other disciples. When I sent you formerly, said he, to preach the gospel, you may remember I ordered you to go without any provision, either for your sustenance or defence, assuring you, that though you would indeed meet with great opposition, yet Providence would dispose some men in all places to be your friends, and to furnish you with all necessities; and accordingly you found that you wanted for nothing, but were wonderfully supported, without any care or provision of your own, in the whole journey, and finished your work with success. But now the case is very different: the time of that greatest trial and distress, whereof I have often forewarned you, is just at hand: and you may now make all the provision in your power, and arm yourselves against it, as much as you are able.

The disciples, thinking their great Master meant that they should arm themselves in a literal sense, and endeavor to oppose the assaults that would shortly be made upon them by the Jews, answered, "Lord, here are two swords:" but the blessed Jesus, who only intended to convey an idea of their approaching distress and temptations, and to arm them against the surprise, replied, "It is enough;" you need not trouble yourselves about any more weapons of this nature for your defence.*

* "The Redeemer felt that it would be useless at such a moment to enter into extended details. . . ." For the disciples were too widely mistaken to allow a hope of bringing them into a right position for forming a proper judgment. He therefore says, 'It is enough,' as we give an evasive answer to children, when we find the impossibility of making ourselves intelligible to them."—*Olshausen*.

As our blessed Saviour was now to be but a short time with his disciples, he thought proper to take his farewell of them, which he did in the most affectionate manner. These melancholy tidings greatly troubled them. They were unwilling to part with so kind a friend, so dear a master, so wise a guide, and so profitable a teacher; especially as they thought they should be left in a forlorn condition, a poor and helpless prey to the rage and hatred of a blind and malicious generation. They seemed willing to die with their Lord, if that might be accepted. Why cannot I follow thee? I will lay down my life for thee! was the language of one, and even all, of them; but they could not support the thought of a disconsolate separation.

Their great and compassionate Master, seeing them thus dejected, endeavored to cheer their drooping spirits; "Let not your hearts be troubled." Listen attentively to what I am going to deliver for your consolation: "I am going to prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." A reviving word of promise. They were one day to meet again their dear, their affectionate Master, in a place where they should live together to eternity. John xiv. 1, etc.

But death makes so vast a distance between friends, and the disciples then knew so little of a future state, that they seemed to doubt whether they should, after their parting, meet their great Redeemer. They neither knew the place where he was going, nor the way that led to his kingdom: "Lord," said Thomas, "as we know not whither thou goest, how can we know the way?" In answer to this question, he told them that he was

“the way, the truth, and the life;” as if he had said, Through the propitiatory sacrifice I am about to offer, the sacred truths I have delivered, and the divine assistance which I shall hereafter dispense, you are to obtain that happiness which I go to prepare for you in the house of my Father.

Philip answered, Lord, show us but once the Father, and we shall be fully satisfied.

Jesus replied, Have I been so long with you, Philip, and yet thou art a stranger to him who sent me? I tell you, that to know one, is to be acquainted with both.

Surely, then, ye have matter sufficient to comfort and support your spirits, under the thoughts of my departure from you. Ye have abundant reason to believe that I have power to perform all the promises I have made you; and the design of my departure is actually to perform them. When I am returned to my Father, ye shall soon receive sufficient pledges of my care and remembrance of you. Ye shall be endued with power not only to perform the same works ye have seen me do, as healing diseases, giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, and the like, for the conviction of the Jews: but even to do greater things than these; to speak with all kinds of tongues, and to propagate my religion among the Gentiles, even through all the nations of the earth. John xiv. 12.

And whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father, in my name, as being my disciples, and in order to promote the work of the gospel, shall certainly be granted you. That God may be greatly glorified by the extraordinary success and spreading of the religion of his Son, I say,

that whatsoever ye shall ask, I will take care, after my return to the Father, that it shall be granted you.

The Father shall send you another advocate and comforter, even his Holy Spirit, the author and teacher of truth, who shall guide and direct, assist and comfort you in all cases. This Spirit the sensual and corrupt world cannot receive; having no knowledge of the divine truths or disposition to be governed by them. But ye know them, and are disposed to entertain them. The Spirit of the Father is already within you, by his secret and invisible efficacy; and shall hereafter appear in you openly, by great and visible manifestations.*

Thus, though I must depart from you, yet I do by no means leave you comfortless. I leave you with a promise of the Holy Spirit; and I leave you in expectation also of my own return. For though, after a very little while, I shall appear no more to the world, yet to you I will appear again; for I shall live again, and ye also shall live with me.

When, therefore, I have conquered and triumphed over death, ye shall understand more fully, and it shall

* This passage proves that the promise of the Spirit at Pentecost was not his first regenerating influence (which the disciples had already received), but rather a far higher measure of his influence—a measure worthy of the enthroned and glorified Son of God. Nor was this communication of the Spirit to be a transient thing, but abiding in the church in all ages, in a degree adequate to the personal preservation, consolation, and efficiency of believers in every land and age, to the end of the world. Hence the Gospel, as distinguished from the Law, is called “the ministration of the Spirit,” and for that reason, the permanent ministration of life, righteousness, light, liberty, and glory. 2 Cor. iii. 3–18. His energy is not always manifested to the world, but is still latent in the church (1 John iv. 4); and faith and prayer are the means appointed to call it into vigorous and victorious action. Luke xi 13; Ephes. iii. 13–21; vi. 18–20.

appear more visible, by great and manifest effects, that I act in all things agreeably to my Father's will, and am perfectly invested with his power; and that ye in like manner, have my power and commission communicated to you; so that there is a perfect unity and communion between us. Only ye must remember, that the one necessary condition on which all depends, is, that ye continue steadfast and immovable to me, in your faith and in your obedience to my commands. He, and he only, who embraces my doctrine, and obeys and practices it, shall be judged to be sincere in his love toward me. And he who loves me in that manner, shall be loved by my Father; and I myself also will love him, and manifest myself to him.

Here Judas Thaddeus interrupted his Master, saying, Lord, why wilt thou choose to manifest thyself to us, a few particular persons, and not to the generality of the world?

Jesus replied, I have already told you the reason for my acting in this manner; because the generality of the world are not disposed to obey my commandments, the necessary condition of maintaining communion with me. But ye are disposed to embrace my doctrine, and to obey it; and therefore, I manifest myself to you. And whoever else will so love me as to keep my commandments, him also will I and my Father love, and will maintain communion with him, and all spiritual blessings shall be poured down upon him, and he shall be made partaker of happiness and eternal life.

On the contrary, whoever loves me not, that is, obeys not my commandments, shall have no intercourse or communion with me. Neither will my Father love or

honor him, or, make any manifestations of himself to him; for as my commandments are not my own, but the Father's commandments; therefore, whoever dishonors me, my Father will look upon him as dishonoring himself.

These things have I briefly spoken to you now, according to the shortness of the time I am to continue with you, and to comfort you for the present, against my departure. But when the Comforter whom I promised you, is come, even the Holy Spirit, whom my Father shall send you on my account, he shall instruct you more fully, recalling to your remembrance what you have forgotten, explaining what is yet obscure, and supplying what is farther necessary to be taught you, and to be understood by you.

In the meantime I take my leave of you, and my blessing I leave with you: not formally, and after the common fashion of the world, but affectionately and sincerely; retaining a careful remembrance of you, and with an earnest desire and intention of returning again speedily to you. If you loved me with a wise and understanding affection, ye would rejoice, instead of grieving at my present departure; because I am going to my Father, the supreme author of all glory and happiness.

These things I have now told you before they come to pass, that when ye see them happen, your faith in me, and your expectation of the performance of all my promises, may be confirmed and strengthened. The time will not allow me to say much more to you, at present: my end draweth near, the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of darkness, is at this

instant employing all his wicked instruments to apprehend and destroy me.* Not that either the power of the devil, or the malice of man, can at all prevail over me, but because the time of my suffering, according to the appointment of divine wisdom, is arrived; and that I may demonstrate to the world my love and obedience to my Father, I willingly submit myself to be put to death by the hands of sinful and cruel men. Rise up, let us be going, that I may enter on my sufferings.

Having thus spoken, they finished the supper with singing a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives.† On their arrival at the place which was to be the scene of his sufferings, he desired them to fortify themselves

* The fearful prevalence of evil among men is implied in the title here conferred on Satan, "the prince of this world." Parallel passages elsewhere occur to indicate the same awakening thought. But here the words of Jesus seem to indicate not merely the active agency of Satan's instruments in compassing his betrayal and death, but a final assault of that malignant spirit on his soul in the garden of Gethsemane. To this agree the facts of his agony and bloody sweat, and the words addressed to his enemies, "But this is *your* hour, and *the power of darkness.*" Luke xxii. 52, 53. Compare Ephes. vi. 12, 13.

† This view of our author is not certain, and not without difficulties. It compels us to suppose a division in the midst of our Lord's farewell discourse not easily to be conceived, and assigns no convenient place for what follows. But more than this, it conflicts directly with the words of John himself (John xviii. 1), where the passing across the Cedron to Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, is said to have followed the closing prayer of Jesus.

The words, "Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31), seem to have led to the mistake. But it is better to suppose that the disciples were too deeply affected to leave the room at the time, and resumed their seats; to which Jesus tenderly yielded and resumed his discourse. This supposition is not at war with the positive testimony. Nothing could be more natural, indeed, than this lingering, and reseating themselves after rising to depart. It occurs among intimate friends every day.

by prayer, and forewarned them of the terrible effects his sufferings would have upon them; they would make them all stumble that very night, agreeably to the prophecy of Zechariah: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." To strengthen their faith, therefore, he not only mentioned his own resurrection, but told them they should see him in Galilee, after he was risen from the dead.

On our blessed Saviour's mentioning the offence that his disciples would take at his suffering, Peter recollected what had been said to him in particular, before they left the house. Grieved, therefore, afresh, to find his Master entertain such thoughts of him, and being now armed with a sword, the vehemence of his temper urged him to boast a second time of his courageous and close attachment to his Master. "Though all men," said he, "should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." But Jesus, knowing that human confidence and security were weak and frail, thought proper to forewarn him again of his danger, and told him that the cock should not crow before he had denied him.

Peter, however, still continued to repeat his confidence: I will die with thee, but never deny thee. The disciples all joined with Peter in professing their fixed resolution of suffering death rather than that they would deny their Master; but the event fully confirmed the prediction of our Saviour. From hence we may learn how ignorant men are of their own hearts, and that the strongest resolutions in their own strength avail them nothing.

The compassionate Redeemer of mankind, not will-

ing to lose one single moment of the short time of his ministry that yet remained, continued to instruct his disciples in the great truths he came into the world to explain; and, from the vines which were growing round him on the Mount of Olives,* he began his excellent discourse with the parable of the vine, to the following import:

Hitherto, said the blessed Jesus, the Jewish church and nation have been the peculiar care of Providence; as a choice and goodly vine, likely to bring forth much fruit, is the special care of the husbandman. But from henceforth my church, my disciples, and the professors of my religion, of what country or nation soever they be, shall become the people of God, and the peculiar care of Divine Providence. I will be to them the root and stock of a vine of which they are the branches and my Father the husbandman and vine-dresser.

As in the management of a choice vine the skilful vine-dresser cuts off all barren and superfluous branches that they may not burden nor exhaust the tree, and prunes and dresses the fruitful branches, that they may grow continually and so bear more fruit, thus, in the government of my church, all useless, wicked, and incorrigible members, my Father, sooner or later, by his judgments, cuts off and destroys; but those who are sincerely pious and good, he, by the various and merciful dispensations of his providence toward them, tries, purifies, and amends, that they may daily improve, and be more and more abundant in all good works.

* See the foregoing note.

Now ye, my apostles,* are such members as these, being purified in heart and mind, and prepared for every good work, by your lively faith in me, and sincere resolutions to obey my commands. Continue steadfastly in this state, and then you may be sure of deriving all spiritual blessings from me, as the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine. But as a branch, without continuing in the vine, cannot bear any fruit, but presently dries up and perishes, so ye, unless ye continue steadfast in your communion with me (by a lively faith and sincere obedience, so as to receive grace and spiritual blessings), can never bring forth any good fruit of true holiness and righteousness, but will fall into vanity, superstition, and wickedness, and at last utterly perish.

If you continue in me, by believing my words, and holding fast what ye believe, and obeying and practicing it accordingly, no power or malice, either of man or of devils, shall be able to hurt you or oppose your doctrines. For, though I be absent from you in body, I yet will hear your prayers, and my Father himself also will hear you; and whatsoever ye shall ask, for the glory of the Almighty and the propagation of my true religion in the world, shall certainly be granted you.

But, above all things, carefully remember to demonstrate your continuance in me by abounding in all good works of holiness, righteousness, and charity. This is the honor which my Father desires and expects from you; even as it is the glory and desire of the vine-dresser

* Although the apostles were members of Christ, it was not as apostles, but as disciples or believers. Whatever was said to them here, belongs to every believer in Christ, if not in a primary, yet in a secondary sense. Christ is equally the root and support of all their spiritual life.

that his vine should bring forth much fruit. And this is the honor that I myself expect from you, that ye shall prove yourselves to be really and indeed my disciples, by imitating my example and obeying my commands. This ye are bound to do, not only in duty, but in gratitude also ; for, as my Father hath loved me, so have I also loved you ; and ye, in like manner, ought to love me again, that you may continue to be loved by me. But the way to express your love toward me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my commandments, even as I, by keeping my Father's commandments, have expressed my love toward him, and continue to be loved by him.

These things have I spoken to you before my departure, that the comfort ye have taken in my presence may be continued in my absence, and even increase with the coming of the Holy Spirit,* as it will be upon this condition, which I have so often repeated to you, that you keep my commandments. And the principal of these commandments is, that ye love one another ; not after the common fashion of the world, but in such a manner as I have loved you ; nor can you be ignorant what sort of love that is, when I tell you that I am now going to lay down my life for you. This is the highest instance in which it is possible for a man to express his love toward his greatest friends and benefactors ; but this I am now going to do for you and for all mankind. I might, indeed, justly call you servants, considering the infinite distance between me and you, and the obligation ye have to obey my commandments ; but I have not treated you as servants (who are not admitted into their

* See note on page 379

master's counsels), but as friends, revealing to you the whole will of my Father with all freedom and plainness.

I have, I say, behaved myself to you as to the nearest friends. Not that you first obliged me, or did any acts of kindness for me; but I have freely, and of my own good pleasure, chosen you to be my apostles, and the preachers of my gospel, that you may go and declare the will of God to the world, and bring forth much and lasting fruit, in the conversion of men to the knowledge of the truth and to the profession and practice of true religion. In the performance of this work, whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father, in my name, in order to enable you to perform it effectually and with full success, shall certainly be granted you.

Now, all these things which I have spoken unto you concerning the greatness of my love toward you, in choosing you to be my apostles, in revealing unto you the whole will of my Father, and in laying down my life for you, I have urged and inculcated upon you for this reason chiefly, as I at first told you, that ye may learn, after my example, to "love one another."

The world, indeed, you must expect, will hate and persecute you on my account. But this you ought not to be surprised or terrified at, knowing that it is no worse treatment than I myself have met with before you. Be not, therefore, surprised when you meet with opposition; nor think to find better treatment in the world than I myself have done. Remember what I have already told you, that the disciple is not above his master, nor is he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

If men had generally and readily embraced my doctrine, you might, indeed, have had some reason to expect that they would willingly have received yours also. But since I myself have suffered great indignities and persecutions from wicked and perverse, from obstinate and incorrigible men, only for opposing their vices, it is highly reasonable that you should expect to undergo the like treatment upon the like account. In all which sufferings you will, moreover, have this further comfortable consideration to support you, that the justice of your own cause, and the injustice of your persecutors', will by that means most evidently appear; seeing ye are persecuted only for professing and preaching, in my name, the doctrine of true religion, and they persecute you only because they know not God, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in his commands.

Indeed, had not I appeared to the world with all possible demonstrations of authority and truth, teaching them a most holy and undeniable doctrine, sufficient to reform their manners and amend their lives, and, moreover, demonstrated my divine commission by such proofs as ought to satisfy and convince the most doubting and suspicious minds, they might have had some plea or excuse of ignorance for their unbelief. But now, since all reasonable evidence has been offered them, and proper methods used for their conversion and salvation, and yet they wilfully and obstinately reject these means of grace, it is plain they have no excuse for their sin; but they oppose and persecute you only because they will not forsake their worldly lusts, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in the commands of the Almighty. So that they who oppose and

persecute you, as they have before persecuted me, show plainly that they are haters of God and of his most holy commandments; which is, as I have already told you, a plain evidence of the justice of your own cause and of the injustice of your persecutors'. If I had not, I say, done such works among them as no man ever did, they might indeed have had some appearance of excuse for their sin. But it is no wonder, when men have given themselves wholly up to be governed by worldly affections, passions, and vices, they should act contrary to all the reason and evidence in the world; for this is but the natural consequence of obstinate and habitual wickedness; and hereby is only fulfilled in me what holy David long since prophetically complained of, that they hated him without a cause.

But, notwithstanding all the opposition that wicked and incorrigible men will make against my doctrine, there will not be wanting powerful promoters of it, who shall effectually overcome all opposition. For the Comforter, whom, I said, I will send you from heaven, even that "Spirit of truth" which cometh forth and is sent from the Father, shall, when he cometh, with wonderful efficacy, bear testimony to the truth of my doctrine, and cause it to be spread through the world with incredible success. Nay, and ye yourselves also, though now so weak, fearful, and doubting, shall then very powerfully bear testimony to the truth of all the things whereof ye, having been all along present with me, have been eye-witnesses from the beginning.

Thus have I warned you beforehand of the opposition and persecution ye must expect to meet with in the world, that when it cometh ye may not be surprised

and terrified, so as to be discouraged thereby from persisting in the performance of your duty.

Having finished his discourse, "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed," with great fervency, to his Father. (The prayer itself is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John.)

His prayer being ended, Jesus and his disciples came down from the Mount of Olives,* into a field below, called Gethsemane, through which the brook Cedron ran, and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden, called the Garden of Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down till he should retire to pray, taking with him Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now to be eye-witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden door, to watch the approach of Judas and his band.

The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great that the very prospect of them excited the exclamation, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch."† On this great occasion, he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul by which, as well as by dying on the cross, he

* See second note on page 382.

† The object of this watching was threefold. 1. That they might guard against surprisal from without and temptation within. 2. That they might witness the agony of the great Sufferer, and give him their united sympathy and prayers. 3. That they might be able to withstand the terrible shock of their Lord's betrayal into the hands of his bloodthirsty foes, who, under the sacred forms of justice, were about to condemn the spotless Son of God to a death of shame. How full of touching tenderness the question of Jesus, when he found them sleeping, "What! could ye not watch *with me* one hour?" Matt. xvi. 40.

became a sin-offering and accomplished the redemption of mankind.

He now withdrew from them about a stone's cast; for his human nature being overburdened beyond measure, he found it necessary to retire and pray, that, if it was possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him. It was not the fear of dying on the cross which made him speak or pray in such a manner. To suppose this would infinitely degrade his character. Yet the blessed Jesus, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the divine, could not but shrink at the prospect of such sufferings as he had to endure. He addresses his Divine Father with a sigh of fervent wishes that the cup might, if possible, be removed from him. In the Greek, it is, "Oh that thou wouldst remove this cup from me!" And having first knelt and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding, immediately, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."*

* We cannot be too thankful for this perfect example of prayer under the most agonizing distress. The beloved Son of God utters no complaint of his Father, but flies to his bosom for relief. He fears no offence at his requests, as if they were in conflict with the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God, or a surrender of his own great purpose in coming into the world to save sinners. He asks, he entreats, he implores relief, but only in a way consistent with his Father's will and his Father's glory. With him he leaves his case in absolute submission. He totally sacrifices his own will to that of his Father, in the full assurance that He cannot and will not do wrong, and that his sufferings shall not exceed, by a single iota, the measure required, "that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 26. How should his example be endeared to us by the fact that "he suffered for us, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God!" 1 Pet. iii. 18.

At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father. "And when he arose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow." This circumstance shows how much his disciples were affected with their Master's sufferings. The sensations of grief which they felt on seeing his unspeakable distress so overpowered them that they sank into a sleep.

Our blessed Saviour, for the last time, came to his disciples, and, seeing them still asleep, he said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Matt. xxvi. 45, 46. The event will soon be over which causes your sorrow: I am betrayed, and ready to be delivered unto death.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BLESSED REDEEMER IS TAKEN BY A BAND OF SOLDIERS AT THE INFORMATION OF THE TRAITOR JUDAS—HEALS A WOUND GIVEN THE HIGH-PRIEST'S SERVANT BY SIMON PETER—FULFILMENT OF OUR LORD'S PREDICTION CONCERNING PETER—THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD IS ARRAIGNED AT THE BAR OF THE SANHEDRIM, AND TRIED BY THE JEWISH COUNCIL.

JUDAS, who had often resorted to the Garden of Gethsemane with the disciples of our Lord, knowing

the spot and the usual time of his Master's repairing thither, informed the chief priests and elders that the time for apprehending Jesus was now come. They therefore sent a band of soldiers with him, and servants carrying lanterns and torches to show them the way; because, though it was always full moon at the passover, the sky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was shaded with trees. At the same time, a deputation of their number accompanied the band, to see that every one did his duty.

Judas having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, they went thither with lanterns and torches and weapons; for they were exceedingly anxious to secure and get him into their hands; and the soldiers, having, perhaps, never seen Jesus before, found it necessary that Judas should distinguish him, and point him out to them by some particular sign. When, therefore, they approached near the spot, Judas (who was at the head of the band) suddenly ran forward, and, coming up to Jesus, said, "Hail, Master! and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Before, however, Judas could make any reply, the band (who had fixed their eyes on the person he had kissed) arrived immediately, and surrounded Jesus.

Judas certainly concealed his treachery so well that Peter did not suspect him, or it is probable he would have struck at him rather than at Malchus, the high-priest's servant.

The appointed time of our Lord's sufferings being now come he did not as formerly, avoid his enemies; but,

on the contrary, on their telling him they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he replied, "I am he;" thereby intimating to them that he was willing to put himself into their hands. At the same time, to show them that they could not apprehend him without his own consent, he, in an extraordinary manner, exerted his divine power: he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground. "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he; and Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon, then, as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." But the soldiers and the Jews, imagining perhaps that they had been thrown down by some demon or evil spirit, with whom the Jews said he was in confederacy, advanced toward him a second time. "Then he asked again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he;" expressing again his willingness to fall into their hands. "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." If your business be with me alone, suffer my disciples to pass: for the party had surrounded them also. He seems to have made this request to the soldiers, that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." For as he always proportioned the trials of his people to their strength, so here he took care that the disciples should escape the storm which none but himself could sustain.

At length some, more daring than the rest, rudely caught Jesus and bound him; upon which Peter drew

his sword and smote off the ear of the high-priest's servant, who probably was showing greater forwardness than the rest in this business: "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high-priest's servant, and cut off his right ear: the servant's name was Malchus." The enraged disciple was on the point of singly attacking the whole band, when Jesus ordered him to sheath his sword, telling him that his unseasonable and imprudent defence might prove the occasion of his destruction. "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up thy sword in its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Matt. xxvi. 52. He told him, likewise, that it implied both a distrust of God, who can always employ a variety of means for the safety of his people, and also his ignorance of the Scriptures. "Thinkest thou," said he, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

The word "legion" was a Roman military term, being a name which they gave to a body of five or six thousand men; wherefore, in regard that the band which surrounded them was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make use of this term, by way of contrast, to show what an inconsiderable thing the cohort was in comparison to the force he could summon to his assistance—more than twelve legions, not of soldiers, but of angels. He was yet tenderly inclined to prevent any bad consequences which might have followed from Peter's rashness, by healing the servant, and adding, in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingness to

suffer: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

The circumstance of his healing the ear of Malchus by touching it, evidently implies that no wound or distemper was incurable in the hand of Jesus; neither was any injury so great that he could not forgive. It seems somewhat surprising that this evident miracle did not make an impression upon the chief priests, especially as our Lord put them in mind, at the same time, of the other miracles; for, having first said, "Suffer ye thus far; and he touched his ear and healed him," he added, "Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." Luke xxii. 51., etc. And the disciples, when they saw their Master in the hands of his enemies, forsook him, and fled, according to his prediction; notwithstanding they might have followed him without any danger, as the priests had no design against them. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

Then the band, and the captain and officers, took Jesus, and bound him." But it was not the cord which held him; his infinite love was by far the strongest bond. He could have broken those weak ties, and exerted his divinity in a more wonderful manner; he could have stricken them all dead with as much ease as he had before thrown them on the ground; but he patiently submitted to this, as to every other indignity which they chose to offer him, so meek was he under the greatest injuries. Having thus secured him, they led him away. "And there followed him a certain

young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden, who, being awakened by the noise, came out with the linen cloth in which he had been lying cast round his naked body, and having a respect for Jesus, followed him, forgetting the dress he was in.*

They first led Jesus to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high-priest that year. Annas, having himself discharged the office of high-priest, was consequently a person of distinguished character, which, together with his relation to the high-priest, made him worthy of the respect they now paid him. But he refused, singly, to meddle in the affair: they therefore carried Jesus to Caiaphas himself, at whose palace the chief priests, elders, and scribes were assembled, having stayed there all night to see the issue of their stratagem. This Caiaphas was he that advised the council to put Jesus to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the safety of the whole Jewish nation. He seems to have enjoyed the sacerdotal dignity during the whole course of Pilate's government in Judea; for he was advanced to it by Valerius Gracchus, Pilate's predecessor, and was divested of it by Vitellius, governor of Syria, after he had deposed Pilate from his procuratorship.

The apprehending of their dear Master could not but strike his disciples with horror and amazement. Though he had forewarned them of that event, such was their consternation that they fled different ways; some of

* Mark only mentions this fact. Might not he be the young man?

them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance, to see what the issue would be. Of this number was Peter, and another disciple, whom John has mentioned without giving his name, and who therefore is supposed to have been John himself. This disciple, being acquainted at the high-priest's, got admittance for himself first, and soon after for Peter, who had come with him. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high-priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high-priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high-priest, and spake unto them that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down amongst them." The maid-servant who kept the door, concluding Peter to be a disciple also, followed after him to the fire, and, looking earnestly at him, charged him with the supposed crime. "Then said the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" This blunt attack threw Peter into such confusion that he flatly denied his having any connection with Jesus; replying, "I am not," and adding, "I know not, neither understand I, what thou sayest." As if he had said, I do not understand any reason for your asking me such a question.

Thus, the very apostle who had before acknowledged his Master to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and had so confidently boasted of his fortitude and firm attachment to him in the greatest dangers, proved himself an arrant deserter of his cause upon

trial. His shameful fears were altogether inexcusable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker sex, and the terror of the charge was in a great measure taken off by the insinuation made in it that John was likewise known to be Christ's disciple; for, as he was known at the high-priest's, he was consequently known in that character. "Art thou not also one of this man's disciples?" Art thou not one of them, as well as he who is sitting with you? Nothing can account for this conduct of Peter, but the confusion and panic which had seized him on this occasion.* As his inward perturbation must have appeared in his countenance and gesture, he did not choose to stay long with the servants at the fire. He went out, therefore, into the porch, where he was a little concealed. "And he went into the porch: after he had been some time there, another maid saw him, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them; and he again denied, with an oath, I know not the man;" adding perjury to falsehood.

After Peter had been thus attacked without-doors, he thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire. "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." From this circumstance, it is clear that the ensuing was the third denial, and that Peter left the

* The vivid remembrance of the rash blow inflicted on Malchus, and the apprehension that he might be recognized and called to account for it at any moment, distracted Peter's mind and for the time quite paralyzed the power of his faith. Even the inward strength of a good conscience was gone, and utter mental confusion followed. Natural courage failed in these trying circumstances, for want of the moral basis on which it was accustomed to rally and rest. Tossed, like wheat in the sieve of the Tempter, from sin to sin, without strength, purpose, or prayer, he must have perished but for the love and intercession of the suffering Saviour whom he so fearfully denied.

porch, where the second denial happened, and was come again into the hall. "Here one of the servants of the high-priest (being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off) saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew." The words of Malchus's kinsman, bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that man, threw him into such a panic that, when those who stood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it: "He even began to curse and to swear, saying. I know not this man of whom you speak." For when they heard Peter deny the charge they supported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his answer. "Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto;" so that being pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better color he profaned the name of God, by imprecating the bitterest curses on himself if he was telling a falsehood. Perhaps he hoped by these acts of impiety to convince them effectually that he was not the disciple of the holy Jesus.

Thus, the apostle denied his Master three distinct times, with oaths and asseverations, totally forgetting the vehement protestations he had made, a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was probably permitted to fall in this manner, to teach us two lessons: first, that the strongest resolutions formed in our own strength cannot withstand the torrent of temptation; secondly, that the true disciples of Christ, though they fall, may be brought to a conviction of their sin; for he no sooner denied his Master the third time than the cock crew and first awakened in him a conscious-

ness of his sin. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the words of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly."

When the band of soldiers arrived at the high-priest's with Jesus, they found there all the chief priests and scribes and the elders assembled: "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests and the scribes, came together, and led him into their council. And the high-priest asked Jesus of his disciples and his doctrine." He inquired of him what his disciples were; for what end he had gathered them; whether it was to make himself a king; and what the doctrine was which he taught them. In these questions there was a great deal of art; for, as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was that he had set up for the Messiah and deluded the people, they expected that he would claim that dignity in their presence, and so would, on his own confession, have condemned him without any further process. This was unfair, as it was artful and ensnaring. To oblige a prisoner on his trial to confess what might take away his life was a very iniquitous method of proceeding; and Jesus expressed his opinion thereof with very good reason, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge with witnesses. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted; and in secret have I said nothing.* Why asked thou me? ask them which heard

* Nothing different from what he had said in public.

me, what I have said unto them : behold, they know what I said."

It was greatly to the honor of our blessed Redeemer that all his actions were done in public, under the eyes even of his enemies ; because, had he been carrying on any imposture, the lovers of goodness and truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him with propriety : he, therefore, in his defence appealed to that part of his character. But his answer was construed to be disrespectful ; " for, when he had thus spoken, one of the officers, which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high-priest so ?" To which he meekly replied, with the greatest serenity, " If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ?" Show me, prove before this court, wherein my crime consists, or record it in the evidence on the face of my trial ; which if you cannot, how can you answer for this inhuman treatment of a defenceless prisoner, standing on his trial before the world and in open court ? Thus Jesus became an example of his own precept, " Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. v. 39), bearing the greatest injuries with a patience that could not be provoked.

When the Council found that Jesus declined answering the questions whereby they expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Messiah, they proceeded to examine many witnesses to prove his having assumed that character ; as they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who, being only a man, according to their opinion, could not, without the highest affront of the Divine Majesty,

pretend to the title of the Son of God, as it belonged to the Messiah.

But in this examination they acted like interested and enraged persecutors, rather than as impartial judges, forming their questions in the most artful manner, in order, if possible, to draw expressions from him which they might pervert into suspicions of guilt, as some foundation for condemning Jesus, who had so long and faithfully labored for their salvation.

Their witnesses, however, disappointed them, some of them disagreeing in their story, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance. At last, two persons agreed in their depositions: namely, in hearing him say that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days. But this testimony was absolutely false; for our great Redeemer never said he could destroy and build the temple of Jerusalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true that, after banishing the traders from the temple, when the Jews desired to know by what authority he undertook to make such reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his resurrection; bidding them "destroy this temple," pointing, probably, to his body, "and in three days he would raise it up." The witnesses therefore, either through malice or ignorance, perverted his answer into an affirmation that he was able to destroy and build the magnificent temple of Jerusalem in three days; and the judges considered this assertion as blasphemy, because it could only be done by the Divine power.

Our Saviour made no reply to the evidences that were produced against him—which greatly incensed the high-priest, who, supposing that he intended, by his silence,

to put an affront on the council, rose from his seat, and, with great perturbation, demanded the reason of so remarkable a conduct. "Answerest thou nothing? said he: What is it which these witness against thee?" And some of the council added, "Art thou the Christ?" To which our blessed Saviour answered, If I should tell you plainly, you would not believe me; and if I should demonstrate it to you by the most evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced nor let me go. The high-priest, finding all his attempts to trepan our Saviour in vain, said to him, I adjure you solemnly, by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whose presence you stand, that you tell me plainly and truly whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

The consequence attending the confession of the truth did not intimidate the blessed Jesus; for, being adjured by the chief magistrate, he immediately acknowledged the charge; adding, Ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of this truth, in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which will fall upon the Jewish nation; in the quick and powerful progress which the gospel shall make upon the earth; and, finally, in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven at the last day—the sign you have so often demanded in confirmation of my mission.

Upon our blessed Saviour's making this answer, a number of them cried out at once, "Art thou the Son of God?" To which our great Redeemer replied, "Ye say that I am;" a manner of speaking among the Jews which expressed a plain and strong affirmation of the thing expressed. When the high-priest heard this

second assertion, he rent his clothes with great indignation, and said unto the Council, Why need we trouble ourselves to seek for more witnesses? Ye yourselves, nay, this whole assembly are witnesses that he hath spoken manifest and notorious blasphemy. What think ye? To which they all replied that for assuming to himself the character of the Messiah he deserved to be put to death.

Then began the servants and common people to fall upon him, as a man already condemned—spitting upon him, buffeting him, and offering all manner of rudeness and indignities. They blindfolded him; and some of the council, in order to ridicule him for having professed to be the Great Prophet, bade him exercise his prophetic gift, in declaring who had smitten him.

Such was the treatment of the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, which, though derogatory to his character, he bore with patience and resignation, leaving his people an example to follow his steps and to submit to the will of God in all things, nor murmur at any of the dispensations of his providence.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR IS CARRIED BEFORE THE ROMAN GOVERNOR—THE TRAITOR JUDAS BECOMES HIS OWN EXECUTIONER—PILATE PUBLICLY ACQUITS JESUS AND REFERS HIS CASE TO THE DECISION OF HEROD.

THE blessed Jesus being thus condemned by the unanimous* voice of the grand assembly, it was resolved to carry him before the governor, that he likewise might pass sentence on him. The Roman governors of Judea generally resided at Cesarea; but at the great feast they came up to Jerusalem, to prevent or suppress tumults and to administer justice, it being a custom for the Roman governors of provinces to visit the principal towns under their jurisdiction on this latter account. Pilate, being accordingly come to Jerusalem some time before the feast, had been informed of the great ferment among the rulers, and the true character of the person on whose account it was raised, for he entertained a just notion of it: "He knew that for envy they had delivered him." He knew the cause of their envy, was impressed with a favorable opinion of Jesus, and wished, if possible, to deliver him from his vile persecutors.

Early in the morning the Jewish Council brought Jesus to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themselves, however, went not into the hall, but

* Not quite unanimous. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea protested against it, or at least did not consent to it.

stood without, lest they should be defiled, and rendered incapable of eating the passover.

Now Judas Iscariot, who had delivered his Master into the hands of the council, finding his project turn out very differently from what he expected, was filled with remorse for what he had done.* He saw all his golden dreams of temporal honors and advantages sunk at once to nothing; he saw his kind, his indulgent Master condemned and forsaken by all his followers. He saw all this, and determined to make all the satisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed. Accordingly, he came and confessed openly his sin before the chief priests and rulers, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earnestly wished he could recall the fatal transaction of the preceding night. It seems he thought this was the most public testimony he could possibly give of his Master's innocence. I have, said he, committed a most horrid crime, by betraying an innocent man to death. But this moving speech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewish rulers. They affirmed that, however he might think the prisoner innocent, and for that reason had sinned in bringing the sentence of death upon his

* Remorse is the proper term to express the feelings of Judas. The original word used in reference to him is never used to express genuine repentance, which is always "repentance toward God," and leads to "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts xx. 21. Judas "repented himself," that is, was terribly troubled about the consequences of his crime, but thought it still in his power to counteract them by a confession to man and return of the money received. When these efforts failed, he fell into despair. Peter weeps bitterly with the tenderness of returning love; but Judas cannot weep, for he does not love the Master he has so deliberately wronged and heartlessly betrayed. It is the very contrast depicted by Paul in 2 Cor. vii. 10.

head, they were not to blame ; because they knew him a blasphemer, who deserved to die. "What is that to us?" said they : "see thou to that." Nay, they even refused to take the money they had given him as a reward for performing the base act of betraying his Master.

The deepest remorse now seized upon the wretched Judas, and his soul was agitated by the horrors of despair. The innocence and benevolence of his Master, the many favors he himself had received from him, and the kind offices he had done for the sons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind and rendered his torments intolerable. Racked with these agonizing passions, and unable to support the misery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple, and, confessing at the same time his own sin and the innocence of his Master, went away in despair, and hanged himself.

Thus perished Judas Iscariot, the traitor, a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness, and a standing monument of Divine vengeance, to deter future generations from acting in opposition to the dictates of conscience through a love for the things of this world ; for which this wretched mortal betrayed his Master, his Friend, his Saviour, and accumulated such a load of guilt on himself as sunk his soul into the lowest pit of perdition.

The pieces of silver cast down by Judas were gathered up and delivered to the priests, who, thinking it unlawful to put them into the treasury, because they were the wages of a traitor, agreed to lay them out in purchasing the potter's field, and making it a common burial-place for strangers.

We have already observed that the chief priests and elders refused to go themselves into the judgment-hall, lest they should contract some pollution in the house of a heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the passover. The same reason also hindered them from entering the governor's palace, on other festivals, when that magistrate attended in order to administer justice: a kind of structure was therefore erected, adjoining to the palace, which served instead of a tribunal or judgment-seat. This structure, called in the Hebrew *Gabbatha*, was finely paved with small pieces of marble of different colors, being always exposed to the weather. One side of this structure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor passed to the tribunal. By this contrivance the people might stand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and see the governor when he spake to them from the pavement, and observe the whole administration of justice, without danger of being defiled either by him or any of his retinue.

Before this tribunal the great Redeemer of mankind was brought, and the priests and elders having taken their places around the pavement, the governor ascended the judgment-seat and asked them what accusation they had to bring against the prisoner. Though nothing was more natural than for the governor to ask this question, yet the Jews thought themselves highly affronted by it, and haughtily answered, If he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor, we should not have given you this trouble at all, much less at so unseasonable an hour.

Pilate then examined Jesus, and, finding he had not

been guilty of rebellion or sedition, but that he was accused of particulars relating to the religion and customs of the Jews, grew angry, and said, What are these things to me? Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your own law; plainly insinuating that, in his opinion, the crime they laid to the prisoner's charge was not of a capital nature, and that such punishments as they were permitted by Cæsar to inflict were adequate to any misdemeanor that Jesus was charged with. But this proposal of the Roman governor was absolutely refused by the Jewish priests and elders, because it condemned the whole proceeding; and therefore they answered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deserves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but also to set up himself for a king.

The eagerness of the Jews to get Jesus condemned by the Roman governor, who often sentenced malefactors to be crucified, tended to fulfil the saying of our great Redeemer, who, during the course of his ministry, had often mentioned what kind of death he was, by the counsel of his Father, appointed to die.

Pilate, finding it impossible to prevent a tumult unless he proceeded to try Jesus, ascended again the judgment-seat, and commanded his accusers to produce their accusations against him. Accordingly, they accused him of seditious practices, affirming that he had used every method in his power to dissuade the people from paying taxes to Cæsar, pretending that he himself was the Messiah, the great King of the Jews, so long expected. But they brought no proof of these assertions. They only insinuated they had already convicted him

of this assertion, which was absolutely false. Pilate, however, asked him, Is it true what these men lay to your charge, that you have indeed attempted to set up yourself as King of the Jews?

To which Jesus replied, Have you ever, during your stay in this province, heard any thing of me that gave you reason to suspect me of secret practices and seditious designs against the government? or do you found your question only on the present clamor and tumult that is raised against me? If this be the case, be very careful lest you be imposed on merely by the ambiguity of a word; for to be "King of the Jews" is not to erect a temporal throne in opposition to that of Cæsar, but a thing of very different nature: the kingdom of the Messiah is a heavenly kingdom. To which Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Can I tell what your expectations are, and in what sense you understand these words? The rulers and chiefs of your own people, who are the most proper judges of these particulars, have brought you before me as a riotous and seditious person: if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou hast been guilty of.

Jesus answered, I have indeed a kingdom, and this kingdom I have professed to establish. But then it is not of this world, nor have my endeavors to establish it any tendency to cause disturbances in the government. For, had that been the case, my servants would not have suffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews. But I tell you plainly, my kingdom is wholly spiritual.* I reign in the hearts of my people, and sub-

* This is not to be understood in so restricted a sense as to exclude the Saviour's claim to a higher dominion in the heavenly world. Ephes. ii.

due their wills and affections into a conformity to the will of God. You acknowledge, then, in general, answered Pilate, that you have professed to be a king? To which the blessed Jesus replied, In the sense I have told you, I have declared, and do now declare, myself to be A KING. For this very end I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; and whosoever sincerely loves and is always ready to embrace the truth will hear my testimony, and be convinced of it. Pilate answered, "What is truth?" and immediately went out to the Jews, and said unto them, I have again examined this

19-23. Even the dying thief recognized in Jesus the Lord of that higher kingdom. Luke xxiv. 42. How far the resources of that universal kingdom may be made to bear upon the advancement of his spiritual kingdom on earth, we know not fully now (Matt. xxviii. 18-20); but this is certain, that they are never used to destroy its spiritual character, and this is the point all important in our Lord's words to Pilate.

The real question at issue before the Roman governor was, "Is Jesus a king in any such sense as must involve rebellion against Cæsar?" Now on this point our Lord's answer is perfectly explicit, and entirely consistent with his whole doctrine and deportment from the beginning of his ministry. In fact, it was this spirituality of his kingdom that most offended the Jewish people and stumbled his own disciples, who could not reconcile it with the popular idea of the Messiah. Yet Daniel had expressly foretold that Messiah's kingdom should be diverse from all other kingdoms, particularly in this, that his people should be "the people of the saints," *i. e.*, a holy people. Dan. vii. 27. Hence the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, on the need of a regenerating change in all who would enter it, here and hereafter. John iii. 3.

That this spiritual nature of his kingdom was a point which admitted no compromise, may be seen by reference to the remarks of Neander in the note on p. 55, where he shows the issue involved in the temptation to receive from Satan's hands "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Christ could die for the truth on this point, but the diadem of Cæsar could not tempt him to compromise or abandon it.

man, but cannot find him guilty of any fault which, according to the Roman law, is worthy of death.

The generous declaration made by the governor of the innocence of our blessed Saviour had no effect on the superstitious and bigoted Jews. They even persisted in their accusations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee: "He stirreth up," said they, "the people, beginning from Galilee to this place."

Jesus, however, made no answer at all to this heavy charge. Nay, he continued silent, notwithstanding the governor himself expressly requested him to speak in his own defence. A conduct so extraordinary in such circumstances astonished Pilate exceedingly; for he had great reason to be persuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is, he was altogether ignorant of the divine counsel by which the whole affair was directed.

There were many reasons which induced the blessed Jesus not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem lost and undone sinners, by offering up himself a sacrifice for them; but, had he pleaded with his usual force, the people had, in all probability, been induced to ask his release, and consequently his death had been prevented. Besides, the gross falsehood of the accusation, known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply absolutely needless.

In the meantime, the chief priests continued to accuse him with great noise and tumult. And the meek and humble Jesus still continuing mute, Pilate spake again to him, saying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence?

Dost thou not hear how vehemently these men accuse thee? But Pilate, recollecting what the chief priests had said with regard to a sedition in Galilee, asked if Jesus came out of that country; and, on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who was also then at Jerusalem. The governor supposed that Herod, in whose dominion the sedition was said to have been raised, must be a much better judge of the affair than himself; besides, his being a Jew rendered him more versed in the religion of his own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders: he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel persecution. But if, contrary to all human probability, he should, at their solicitation, condemn Jesus, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose, by this action, to regain Herod's friendship, which he had formerly lost, by encroaching, in all probability, on his privileges.

But however that be, or whatever motive induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing Jesus, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle. In this he was, however, disappointed; for, as Herod had apostatized from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once probably a convert, and had even put his teacher to death, the blessed Jesus, however liberal of his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed to him.

Herod, finding his expectations thus cut off, ordered the blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in color those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him. From Herod's dressing him in this manner, it evidently appears that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing but his having assumed the character of the Messiah; for the affront put upon him was plainly in derision of that profession.

The other head of accusation—namely, his having attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee, on account of tribute paid to Cæsar—they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and malicious falsehood. And, no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to comply with the wishes of his enemies.



CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ROMAN GOVERNOR, FOR WANT OF EVIDENCE, PROPOSES TO ACQUIT AND RELEASE JESUS THREE SEVERAL TIMES; BUT, AT THE PRESSING INSTIGATION OF THE JEWS, HE CONDEMNS AND DELIVERS HIM UP.

THE Roman governor, in order to acquire popular applause, used generally, at the Feast of the Passover,

to release a prisoner nominated by the people. At this feast there was one in prison, named Barabbas, who, at the head of a number of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city and committed murder during the confusion.

The multitude, being now assembled before the governor's palace, began to call aloud on him to perform the annual office of mercy customary at that festival.

Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them that he was very willing to grant the favor they desired, and asked them whether they would have Barabbas or Jesus released unto them. But, without waiting for an answer, he offered to release Jesus, knowing that the chief priests had delivered him through envy; especially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes laid to his charge.

While these particulars were transacting, Pilate received a message from his wife, then with him at Jerusalem,* and who had that morning been greatly affected by a dream, which gave her much uneasiness. The dream had so great an effect on this Roman lady, that she could not rest till she had sent an account of it to her husband, who was then sitting with the tribunal

* Under the Emperor Tiberias, for the first time, the governors of provinces were permitted to take their wives with them. According to tradition, the name of this wife of Pilate was Claudia Porcula, and it is supposed by some that she had secretly embraced the Jewish faith.

On the question whether her dream was natural or supernatural, Calmet remarks: "As our Saviour was apprehended about midnight, out of the city, and without Pilate's privity and detained in the house of Annas until it was day, there was no possibility of her having any notice of it before she went to bed, and, therefore, we have the juster reason to believe that this dream was sent providentially upon her, for the clearer manifestation of our Lord's innocence."

on the pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous person he was then judging.

The people had not yet determined whether they would have Jesus or Barabbas released to them : therefore, when Pilate received the message from his wife, he called the chief priests and rulers together, and, in the hearing of the multitude, made a speech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination which Jesus had undergone, both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring that in both courts it had turned out honorably to his character ; for which reason he proposed to them that he should be the object of the people's favor. Pilate did the priests the honor of desiring to know their inclination in particular, perhaps with a design to soften their stony hearts, and, if possible, to move them for once to pity an injured but innocent man. But he was persuaded that, if pity was absolutely banished from their callous breasts, his proposals would have been acceptable to the people, who he expected would embrace the first opportunity of declaring in his favor ; yet in this he was disappointed. They cried out, all at once, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas."

Pilate himself was astonished at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his question ; for he could hardly believe what he had himself heard. But, on their again declaring that they desired Barabbas might be released, he asked them what he should do with Jesus, which is called Christ. As if he had said, You demanded that Barabbas should be released ; but what shall I then do with Jesus ? You cannot surely desire me to crucify him, whom so many of you have acknowl-

edged as your Messiah? "But they cried, saying, Crucify him! crucify him! Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him!" They were so resolutely determined to have him destroyed, that, notwithstanding the governor urged them again and again to desire his release, declared his innocence, and offered several times to dismiss him, they would not hear it, uttering their rage, sometimes in hollow, distant, inarticulate murmurs, and sometimes in furious outcries—to such a pitch were their passions raised by the craft and artful insinuations of the priests. Pilate, finding it therefore in vain to struggle with their prejudices, called for water, and washed his hands before the multitude, crying out, at the same time, that the prisoner had no fault, and that he himself was innocent of his blood.

By this action and declaration Pilate seems to have intended to make an impression on the Jewish populace, by complying with the institution of Moses, which orders, in case of an unknown murder, the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood." Deut. xxi. 7. And in allusion to this law, the Psalmist says, "I will wash my hands in innocence." According, therefore, to the Jewish rite, Pilate made the most solemn and public demonstration of the innocence of our Redeemer, and of his resolution of having no hand in his death. But, notwithstanding the solemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out with one voice, "His blood be on us and on our children." Dreadful imprecation! it shocks humanity! An imprecation

which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is still a heavy burden on that people ! The governor, finding it impossible to alter their choice, released unto them Barabbas. And, as it was the general practice of the Romans to scourge those criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the blessed Jesus to be scourged before he delivered him to the soldiers to be put to death.

The soldiers, having scourged Jesus and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the pretorium, or common hall, where they added the shame of disgrace to the bitterness of his punishment ; for, sore as he was by reason of the stripes they had given him, they dressed him in a purple robe in derision of his being King of the Jews. Having dressed him in this robe of mock majesty, they put a reed in his hand instead of a sceptre, and, after plaiting a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown, forcing it down in so rude a manner that his temples were torn and his face disfigured with his most precious blood. To the Son of God in this condition the rude soldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of respect, but at the same time gave him severe blows on the head, which drove the points of the wreath afresh into his temples, and then spit on him, to express their highest contempt.

The governor's office obliged him to be present at this shocking scene of inhumanity. The sight of an innocent and eminently holy person treated with such shocking barbarity raised in his breast the most painful sensations of pity. And though he had given sentence that it should be as the Jews desired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the soldiers to be crucified, he

was in hopes that if he showed him to the people in that condition they must relent, and earnestly petition for him to be released. Filled with this thought, he resolved to carry him out, and exhibit to their view a spectacle capable of softening the most envenomed, obdurate, and enraged enemy; and went out himself and said unto them, Though I have sentenced this man to die, and have scourged him as one that is to be crucified, yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again testify how fully I am persuaded of his innocence, and that ye may yet have an opportunity of saving his life.

As soon as the governor had finished his speech, Jesus appeared on the pavement, his hair, his face, his shoulders all clotted with blood, and the purple robe daubed with the spittle of the soldiers. And, that the sight of Jesus in this distress might make the greater impression on the people, Pilate, while coming forward, cried out, "Behold the man!" As if he had said, Will nothing make you relent? Have ye lost all the feelings of humanity, and bowels of compassion? Can you bear to see the innocent, a son of Abraham, thus injured? But all this was to no purpose: the priests, whose rage and malice had extinguished not only the sentiments of justice and feelings of pity natural to the human heart, but also that love which countrymen bear for each other, no sooner saw Jesus than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent, and therefore, laying decency aside, they led the way to the multitude, crying out, with all their might, Crucify him! crucify him!

Pilate, vexed to see the Jewish rulers thus obstinately bent on the destruction of one from whom they had

nothing to fear that was dangerous either with regard to their church or state, passionately told them that if they would have him crucified they must do it themselves ; because he would not suffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime. But this they also refused, thinking it dishonorable to receive permission to punish a person who had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge. Besides, they considered with themselves that the governor might afterward have called it sedition, as the permission had been extorted from him. Accordingly, they told him that, even though none of the things alleged against the prisoner were true, he had committed such a crime in presence of the Council itself as by the law deserved the most ignominious death. He had spoken blasphemy, calling himself the Son of God—a title which no mortal could assume without the highest degree of guilt : “ We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

When Pilate heard that Jesus called himself the Son of God, his fear was increased. Knowing the obstinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earnest ; or perhaps he was himself more afraid than ever to take away his life, because he suspected it might be true. He doubtless remembered the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, and therefore suspected that he really was the Son of God. For it was well known that the religion which the governor professed directed him to acknowledge the existence of demigods and heroes, or men descended from gods. Nay, the heathen believed that their gods themselves appeared upon earth in the forms

of men. Reflections of this kind induced Pilate to go again to the judgment-hall, and ask Jesus from what father he sprung, and from what country he came. But our blessed Saviour gave him no answer, lest the governor should reverse his sentence and absolutely refuse to crucify him. Pilate marvelled greatly at his silence, and said unto Jesus, Why dost thou refuse to answer me? You cannot be ignorant that I am invested with absolute power either to release or crucify you. To which Jesus answered, I well know that you are Cæsar's servant, and accountable to him for your conduct. I forgive you any injury which, contrary to your inclination, the popular fury constrains you to do unto me. Thou hast thy power "from above," from the emperor; for which cause, the Jewish high-priest, who hath put me into thy hands, and, by pretending that I am Cæsar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me; or, if thou refusest, will accuse thee as negligent of the emperor's interest; he is more guilty than thou. "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

This sweet and modest answer made such an impression on Pilate, that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releasing Jesus whether they gave their consent or not; upon which the chief priests and rulers of Israel cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."^{*} If thou releasest the prisoner, who hath set himself up for a king, and has been accused of endeavoring to raise a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the interests of the em-

^{*} See note on page 411.

peror thy master. This argument was weighty,* and shook Pilate's resolution to the very basis.† He was terrified at the thought of being accused to the emperor, who in all affairs of government always suspected the worst, and punished the most minute crimes relative thereto with death. The governor, being thus constrained to yield, contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the priests for stirring up the people to such a pitch of madness, and determined to affront them.

He therefore brought Jesus out a second time on to the pavement, wearing the purple robe and crown of thorns, and, pointing to him, said, "Behold your king!" ridiculing their national expectation of a Messiah. This sarcastic expression stung them to the quick, and they cried out, "Away with him! crucify him!" To which Pilate answered, with the mocking air, "Shall I crucify

* The weight of this argument was not real, but relative only to the character of Pilate. Had Pilate (who was thoroughly satisfied of the innocence of Jesus) been a man of consistent virtue, he could have easily faced his accusers on this charge before the emperor. But the consciousness of many criminal acts in his administration made him fear a general investigation before Tiberias, and to avoid it he preferred to sacrifice the Son of God. That a man of his character should have shown so much conscientiousness as he did, in declaring the entire innocence of our Lord, is indeed wonderful, and marks the overruling hand of Providence.

† "What a moment was that to the hapless pagan! One expression of an honest and bold determination to take a responsibility on himself from which no Roman magistrate ought ever to have shrunk, one righteous resolve to follow the dictates of his own conscience, and the name of Pilate would never have held its melancholy place in the Christian's creed as that of the irresolute and unjust judge, who, against his own most solemn convictions, gave up to a death of agony and shame one whom he knew to be innocent, and even dimly felt to be divine. But that word was never spoken."—*Ellicott*.

your king?*" The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar." Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Messiah, which the whole economy of their religion had been calculated to cherish; they also publicly acknowledged their subjection to the Romans, and consequently, condemned themselves when they afterward rebelled against the emperor.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE INNOCENT, IMMACULATE REDEEMER IS LED FORTH TO MOUNT CALVARY AND THERE IGNOMINIOUSLY CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO MALEFACTORS—A PHENOMENON APPEARS ON THE IMPORTANT OCCASION—OUR LORD ADDRESSES HIS FRIENDS FROM THE CROSS, AND GIVES UP THE GHOST.

THE solemn and awful period now approached when the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, was to undergo the oppressive burden of our sins upon the tree,

*The name of Pontius Pilate is inseparably bound up with the crucifixion of Christ in the history of the world. Speaking of Christians, the Roman historian Tacitus says, "The author of this name was Christ, who was capitally punished, in the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate." There can be no doubt that an official report of the whole affair was transmitted by Pilate himself to the emperor, though, like other records of the age, it has long since perished.

This weak and self-condemned judge prolonged his power but three years by this fearful sacrifice of conscience. Accused, A. D. 36, by the Samaritans, for other crimes, he was sent to Rome by Vitellius, governor of Syria, and thence banished to Vienne in Gaul, where he is said to have committed suicide. What a meeting between him and Christ must that be in the next world!

and submit unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might live at the right hand of God forever and ever.

Sentence being pronounced upon the blessed Jesus, the soldiers were ordered to prepare for his execution—a command which they readily obeyed, and, after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his temples: probably he died wearing it, that the title placed over his head might be the better understood.

It is not to be expected that the ministers of Jewish malice remitted any of the circumstances of affliction, which were ever laid on persons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly, Jesus was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his cross. But the fatigue of the preceding night, spent without sleep, the sufferings he had undergone in the garden, his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trials; the want of food, and the loss of blood he had sustained, and not his want of courage on this occasion, made him faint under the burden of his cross. The soldiers seeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene, in Egypt, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the first Christians, and forced him to bear it after the Redeemer of mankind. The soldiers did not, however, do this out of compassion to the sufferings of Jesus, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means eluding his punishment.

The blessed Jesus, in his journey to Calvary, was followed by an innumerable multitude of people, par-

ticularly of women, who lamented bitterly the severity of his sentence, and showed all the tokens of sincere compassion and grief. Jesus, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time when it lay heaviest upon him, turned himself about, and with a benevolence and tenderness truly divine, said to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.* Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"† Luke xxiii. 28, etc.

Being arrived at the place of execution, which was called Golgotha, or the Place of Skulls, from the criminals' bones which lay scattered there, some of our Redeemer's friends offered him a stupefying potion, to render him insensible to the ignominy and excruciating pain of his punishment. But as soon as he tasted the potion he refused to drink it, being determined to bear

* How would these touching words be recalled to mind at the siege of Jerusalem! Mothers, shut up within the doomed city, saw their sons slain by thousands, heaped one upon another often in the bloody streets, and as the famine grew severe, as Josephus remarks, even envied the dead who had perished by the sword! Nay, more, mothers, in the madness of hunger, killed and devoured their own babes at the breast, to prolong their own miserable lives! And when the city was at last taken by Titus and reduced to ashes, those miserable surviving mothers saw their surviving sons sold into hopeless slavery if under the age of seventeen; or if above that age, nailed by thousands to the cross!

† That is to say, if the innocent thus suffer, what punishment must await the guilty, under the righteous government of God?

his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupefying himself, but by the strength of patience, fortitude, and faith. Jesus having refused the potion, the soldiers began to execute their orders, by stripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to fasten him to the cross. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, instead of crying out through the sharpness of the pain, he calmly, though fervently, prayed for them, and for all those who had any hand in his death; beseeching his heavenly Father to forgive them, and excusing them himself by the only circumstance that could alleviate their guilt—their ignorance. “Father,” said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, “forgive them; for they know not what they do.” This was infinite meekness and goodness, truly worthy of the only-begotten Son of God; an example of forgiveness which, though it can never be equalled by any, should be imitated by all.

But, behold, the appointed soldiers dig the hole in which the cross is to be erected! the cross is placed in the ground; the blessed Jesus lies on the bed of sorrows; they nail him to it—his nerves break—his blood distills—he hangs upon his wounds naked, a spectacle to heaven and earth! Thus was the only begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven to save the world, crucified by his own creatures, and, to render the ignominy still greater, placed between two thieves! “Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth, earth, hear! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him.”

It was usual for the crimes committed by malefactors to be written on a white board, with black, and placed

over their heads on the cross. In conformity to this custom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, that all foreigners, as well as natives, might be able to read it, and fastened it to the cross, over the head of Jesus; and the inscription was, "This is the King of the Jews." But when the chief priests and elders had read this title they were greatly displeased, because, as it represented the crime for which Jesus was condemned, it insinuated that he had been acknowledged for the Messiah. Besides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the most infamous punishment, it implied that all who attempted to deliver the Jews should perish in the same manner. The faith and hope of the nation, therefore, being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the priests thought themselves highly affronted, and accordingly came to Pilate, begging that the writing might be altered. But, as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify Jesus contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refused to grant their request: "What I have written," said he, "I have written."

When the soldiers had nailed the blessed Jesus to the cross and erected it, they divided his garments among them. But his coat, or vesture, being without seam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to cast lots for it; by which the prediction of the prophet concerning the death and sufferings of the Messiah was fulfilled; "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots." A sufficient indication that every circumstance of the death and passion of the blessed Jesus was perfectly known long before in the court of heaven; and, accordingly,

his being crucified between two malefactors was expressly foretold: "And he was numbered with the transgressors."

The common people of the baser sort, whom the vile priests had incensed against the blessed Jesus by the malicious falsehoods they had spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the deposition of witnesses—the common people, I say, seeing him hang in so infamous a manner upon the cross, and reading the inscription placed over his head, expressed their indignation at him by sarcastical expressions: "Ah! thou," said they, "that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross!"

But the common people were not the only persons who mocked and derided the blessed Jesus while he was suffering to obtain the remission of sins for all mankind. The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually destroyed his pretensions to the character of the Messiah, joined the populace in ridiculing him, and, with a meanness of soul which many infamous wretches would have scorned, mocked him even while he was struggling with the agonies of death. They scoffed at the miracles by which he demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and promised to believe on him on condition of his proving his pretensions by descending from the cross: "He saved others," said they; "himself he cannot save: if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him." In the meantime, nothing could be more false and hypocritical than this pretension of the stiff-necked Jews; for they afterward continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding they well knew that he raised himself

from the dead—a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been—a miracle attested by witnesses whose veracity they could not call in question. It was told them by the soldiers whom they themselves placed at the sepulchre to watch the body, and whom they were obliged to bribe largely to conceal the truth. It is therefore abundantly evident that, if the blessed Jesus had descended from the cross, the Jewish priests would have continued in their infidelity, and, consequently, that their declaration was made with no other intention than to insult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands.

The soldiers also joined in this general scene of mockery: “If thou be the King of the Jews,” said they, “save thyself.” If thou art the great Messiah expected by the Jews, descend from the cross by miracle, and deliver thyself from these excruciating torments.

Nor did even one of the thieves forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though laboring himself under the most racking pains and struggling with the agonies of death. But the other exercised a most extraordinary faith, even at the time when our great Redeemer was in the highest affliction, mocked by men, and hanged on the cross, as the most ignominious of malefactors. This Jewish criminal seems to have entertained a more rational and exalted notion of the Messiah’s kingdom than even the disciples themselves. They expected nothing but a secular empire:* he gave

* This language does not seem exactly just to the disciples of Jesus. For if so, wherein was their faith in Jesus worthy of the commendation it had always received from their divine Master as genuine, though weak

strong intimations of his having an idea of Christ's spiritual dominion; for at the very time when Jesus was dying on the cross he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom: "Lord," said he, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Nor did he make this request in vain: the great Redeemer of mankind answered him, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

But let us attentively consider the history of our blessed Saviour's passion, as it offers to our view events absolutely astonishing. For when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the sons and daughters of affliction—when we reflect on the esteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how cheerfully they followed him to the remotest corners of the country, nay, even into the desolate retreats of the wilderness, and with what pleasure they listened to his discourses—when we consider these particulars, I say, we cannot help being astonished to find them at the conclusion rushing all of a sudden into the opposite

and clouded with many of the popular prejudices of the times? Matt. xiii. 11, 16, 17; Luke xxii. 28; John vi 68, 69; xiv. 17.

A careful consideration of all the evidence leads to the conclusion that the disciples up to this time were combining with a true, divine, and spiritual faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour from sin, the common notion that he was also to clothe himself with secular power and dominion. In a word, that his kingdom was to be both spiritual and secular at the same time. Under his dominion, universally and immediately established by miraculous agency, none but just and holy men were to be honored, and the wicked were to be universally put down and punished. This twofold view alone accounts for all the facts, and explains the apparent contradictions in their character.

extreme, and all, as it were, combined to treat him with the most barbarous cruelty.

When Pilate asked the people if they desired to have Jesus released, his disciples, though they were very numerous, and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained absolutely silent, as if they had been speechless or infatuated. The Roman soldiers, notwithstanding their general had declared him innocent, insulted him in the most inhuman manner. The Scribes and Pharisees ridiculed him. The common people, who had received him with hosannas a few days before, mocked him as they passed by, and railed at him as a deceiver. Nay, the very thief on the cross reviled him. This sudden revolution in the humor of the whole nation may seem unaccountable. But, if we could assign a proper reason for the silence of the disciples, the principles which influenced the rest might be discovered in their several speeches. The followers of the blessed Jesus had attached themselves to him in expectation of being raised to great wealth and power in his kingdom,* which they expected would have been established long before this time; but, seeing no appearance at all of what they had so long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps because they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by a miracle.

With respect to the soldiers, they were angry that any one should pretend to royalty in Judea, where Cæsar had established his authority. Hence they insulted our blessed Saviour with the title of king, and paid him, in mockery, the honors of a sovereign. As

* See the preceding note.

for the common people, they seem to have lost their opinion of him, probably because he had neither convinced the Council, nor rescued himself when they condemned him. They began, therefore, to consider the assertion of his destroying the temple, and building it in three days, as a kind of blasphemy, because it required a divine power to execute such an undertaking.

The priests and scribes were filled with the most implacable and diabolical malice against him, because he had torn off their mask of hypocrisy and showed them to the people in their true colors. It is therefore no wonder that they ridiculed his miracles, from whence he derived his reputation. In short, the thief also fancied that he might have delivered both himself and them if he had been the Messiah; but, as no such deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretensions to that high character.

But now, my soul, take one view of thy dying Saviour breathing out his spirit upon the cross! Behold his unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross—those beneficent hands which were incessantly stretched out to unloose thy heavy burdens and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet riveted to the accursed tree with nails—those feet which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns, which shoot their keen afflicting points into his blessed head—that head which was ever meditating peace to poor, lost, and undone sinners, and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayer for their happiness!

See him laboring in the agonies of death, breathing out his soul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this? was ever benevolence so gloriously displayed?

But see! the sun, that glorious luminary of heaven, as it were, hides his face from this detestable action of mortals, and is wrapped in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkness! This preternatural eclipse of the sun continued for three hours, to the great terror and astonishment of the people present at the crucifixion of our dear Redeemer. And surely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, while the Sun of righteousness was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promised land, but from the whole world; for it was at once a miraculous testimony given by the Almighty himself to the innocence of his Son, and a proper emblem of the departure of him who was the light of the world, at least, till his luminous rays, like beams of the morning, shone out anew with additional splendor in the ministry of his apostles.

Nor was the darkness which now covered Judea and the neighboring countries, beginning about noon and continuing till Jesus expired, the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. It is well known that this phenomenon can only happen at the change of the moon; whereas the Jewish passover, at which our great Redeemer suffered, was always celebrated at the full. Besides, the total darkness of an eclipse of the sun never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes; whereas this continued full three hours. Nothing, therefore, but the immediate hand of the Almighty Being, which placed the sun in the centre of the planetary system, could

have produced this extraordinary darkness: nothing but Omnipotence, who first lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, would have deprived it of its cheering rays. Now, ye scoffers of Jesus, whose blood ye have so earnestly desired, and wished it might fall upon you and your children, behold, all nature is dressed in the sable vail of sorrow, and, in a language that cannot be mistaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and Master, weeps for your crimes, and deprecates the vengeance of heaven upon your guilty heads! Happy for you that this suffering Jesus is compassion itself, and even in the agonies of death prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the stroke of his justice.

This preternatural eclipse of the sun was considered as a miracle by the heathens themselves; and one of them cried out, “Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers.”* And well might he use the expression; for never since this planetary system was called from its primitive chaos was known such a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when

* Suidas, author of a valuable Greek Lexicon (about A. D. 1020), cites Dionysius the Areopagite, then at Hieropolis, in Egypt, as expressing himself to his friend, Apollophanes, upon this extraordinary darkness of three hours' duration: “Either the Author of nature suffers, or is sympathizing with some one who does”—the words probably referred to above. The words, if authentic, are remarkable.

Neander tells us that this darkness is mentioned by two heathen annalists, Thallus and Phlegon. The former, quoted by Julius Africanus, a learned Christian historian of the third century (A. D. 220), refers it to an eclipse of the sun; but this, as Julius observes, is impossible at the fall of the moon. The latter, as quoted by Eusebius in his *Chronicle*, says that in the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad (supposed to be the year of Christ's death) there was a total eclipse of the sun, so that “the stars were plainly visible at noonday.” Phlegon lived under Trajan and Hadrian.

the Almighty punished Pharoah for refusing to let the children of Israel depart out of his land, and the sable vail of darkness was for three days drawn over Egypt, the darkness was confined to a part of that kingdom; whereas this that happened at our Saviour's crucifixion was universal.*

When the darkness began, the disciples naturally considered it as a prelude to the deliverance of their Master. For, though the chief priests, elders, and people had sarcastically desired him to descend from the accursed tree, his friends could not but be persuaded that he who had delivered so many from incurable dis-

* Mark agrees with Matthew in saying "there was darkness over the whole land." We are not warranted by the New Testament in extending it beyond Palestine, though it might have spread beyond into Syria and Egypt. See the preceding note.

In the course of nature, darkness sometimes precedes a violent earthquake, as in this instance; but the duration of this darkness and the peculiar time and effects of this earthquake mark it not merely as providential, but as miraculous. As the birth of Jesus was honored by the appearance of a new star of light, it is but fitting that his death should be signaled by a supernatural darkness, significant of so awful an event. Such grand combinations of nature and grace, the physical and the spiritual world, are striking proofs of the moral government of the universe by one Supreme Intelligence.

"While they (the Evangelists) thus specially notice this interval, it may be observed that they maintain the most solemn reserve as to the incidents by which it was marked. . . . The mysteries of those hours of darkness, when with the sufferings of the agonized body mingled the sufferings of the sacred soul, the struggles with sinking nature, the accumulated pressure of the burden of a world's sin, the momentarily more and more embittered foretastings of that which was its wages and its penalty, the clinging desperation of the last assaults of Satan and his mustered hosts, the withdrawal and darkening of the Paternal presence—mysteries such as these, so deep and so dread, it was not meet that even the tongues of apostles should be moved to speak of, or the pens of evangelists to record."—*Ellicott*.

eases, who had restored limbs to the maimed and eyes to the blind, who had given speech to the dumb and called the dead from the chambers of the dust, might easily save himself, even from the cross. When, therefore, his mother, his mother's sister, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple, observed the vail of darkness begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the cross, probably in expectation that the Son of God was going to shake the frame of the universe, unloose himself from the cross, and take ample vengeance on his cruel and perfidious enemies. The blessed Jesus was now in the midst of his sufferings; yet when he saw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breast, especially the distress of his mother. The agonies of death, under which he was now laboring, could not prevent his expressing the most affectionate regard both for her and for them. For, that she might have some consolation to support her under the greatness of her sorrows, he told her the disciple whom he loved would, for the sake of that love, supply his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a son; and therefore he desired her to consider him as such, and expect from him all the duties of a child. "Woman," said he, "behold thy son."

But now the moment when he should resign his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father approached, and he repeated, part, at least, of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering, with a loud voice, these remarkable words: "Eloi, eloi, lama sabacthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Some believe that our blessed Saviour repeated the

whole Psalm—it having been the custom of the Jews, in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the Psalm or section which they cited. If so, as this Psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our dear Redeemer's passion, being, as it were, a summary of the prophecies relating to that subject, by repeating it on the cross the blessed Jesus signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as this Psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time he also claimed of his Father the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him or to his people.

Some of the people who stood by, when they heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of the Psalm, misunderstood him, probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias. Upon which one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink; being desirous to keep him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come to take him down from the cross. But as soon as Jesus had tasted the vinegar he said, “It is finished;” that is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished; the great work, which the only-begotten Son of God came into the world to perform, is finished. In speaking these words, he cried with an exceeding loud voice, and afterward addressed his Almighty Father in words which form the best pattern of a recommendatory prayer at the hour of death: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” And, having uttered these words, “he bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost.”

But behold, at the very instant the blessed Jesus resigned his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, the vail of the temple was miraculously rent from the top to the bottom, probably in the presence of the priest who burnt incense in the holy place, and who, doubtless, published the account when he came out; for our blessed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening sacrifice.

Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Messiah: the earth trembled from its very foundation; the flinty rocks burst asunder, and the sepulchres hewn in them were opened; and many bodies of saints deposited there, awaked, after his resurrection, from the sleep of death, left the gloomy chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jerusalem, and appeared unto many.

Nor did the remarkable particulars which attended that awful period when Jesus gave up the ghost, affect the natives of Judea alone. The Roman centurion who was placed near the cross, to prevent disorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty, and cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God." And others who were with them, when they beheld heaven itself bearing witness of the truth of our great Redeemer's mission, smote their breasts and retired.

Thus were demonstrated, by many awful tokens, the truth, the divinity, and power of our Redeemer's mission; even blind and obdurate Jews were struck with horror, and fully convinced that the person they had cruelly put to death was nothing less than the Son and servant of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BLESSED JESUS TREATED WITH INDIGNITY AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION—A PIOUS PERSON BEGS HIS BODY FROM PILATE IN ORDER FOR INTERMENT.

It was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses that the bodies of those who were hanged should remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the Sabbath was at hand, the Jews begged the governor that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken, to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented, and, accordingly, gave the necessary order to the soldiers to put it in execution. But, on perceiving that Jesus was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors that were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water.*

* This flow of blood and water (serum) proves two things: 1. That Jesus had been dead but a short time, else the blood in the heart would have coagulated. 2. That had a particle of life remained in him such a wound would have extinguished it. As the conversion of the Roman centurion followed the death of Jesus, he cannot be suspected of a design to deceive Pilate in his testimony; and even if he had, the wanton thrust of the soldier's spear would have defeated his design and decided the fact.

The emblematical purpose of this flow of blood and water, as set forth by the apostle John, is to indicate the union of the atonement with the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, in the plan of human redemption. 1. John v. 6.

“May the water and the blood
From his wounded side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.”

This wound, therefore, was of the greatest importance to mankind, as it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and consequently prevented all objections that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The evangelist adds that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken, but his side was pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced."

Among the disciples of Jesus was one called Joseph of Arimathea, a person equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate and begged the body of his great Master. He had, indeed, nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who during the whole course of our Saviour's trial had shown the greatest inclination to release him; but he had reason to apprehend that this action might draw upon him the malice of the rulers of the Jews, who had taken such great pains to get the Messiah crucified. However, the great regard he had for the remains of his Master made him despise the malice of the Jews; being persuaded that Omnipotence would defend him and cover his enemies with shame and confusion. And he well knew that, if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiously cast out among the executed malefactors.

Pilate was at first surprised at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time. He had, indeed, given orders for the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons; but

he knew it was common for them to live several hours after that operation was performed; for, though the pain they felt must have been exquisite to the last degree, yet, as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body.

The governor therefore called the centurion, to know the truth of what Joseph had told him; and, being convinced, from the answer of that officer, that Jesus had been dead some time, he readily gave the body to Joseph.*

This worthy counsellor, having obtained his request, repaired to Mount Calvary, and being assisted by Nicodemus, took the body down from the cross. The latter was formerly so cautious in visiting Jesus that he came to him by night. But in paying the last duties to his Master he used no art to conceal his design; he showed a courage far superior to that of any of his disciples, not only assisting Joseph in taking down the body of Jesus from the cross, but bringing with him a quantity of spices necessary in the burial of our Saviour. Accordingly, they wrapped the body, with the spices, in fine

* The mention of Joseph of Arimathea as a rich man is made here, evidently not with any design to do honor to him or to the cause he espoused on that account, but because the fact makes the fulfilment of a remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, which in our version reads: "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Isaiah liii. 9. More exactly: "And his grave was appointed with the wicked, but he was with the rich man in (or after) his death."—*Dr. Lowth and Barnes.*

Now it was the well known custom of the Jews to bury executed criminals in ground by themselves, as infamous and unclean, and such certainly would have been the burial of Jesus (for "he was numbered among the transgressors," Isaiah liii. 12), had not Joseph unexpectedly applied to Pilate for permission to bury the body in his own new tomb, and obtained it, much to the chagrin of the Jews, his enemies.

linen, and laid it in a new sepulchre, which Joseph had hewn out of a rock for himself. This sepulchre was situated in a garden near Mount Calvary; and, in which having carefully deposited the body of the blessed Jesus, they fastened the door, by rolling to it a very large stone. "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." Matt. xxvii. 59, 60.*

The women of Galilee, who had watched their Redeemer in his last moments and accompanied his body to the sepulchre, observing that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themselves, as soon as the Sabbath was past, to return to the sepulchre and embalm the body of our Saviour, by anointing and swathing him in the manner then common among the Jews. Accordingly, they retired to the city and purchased the spices necessary for that purpose, Nicodemus having furnished only a portion of them.†

* If it be true, as Calmet affirms was the custom of the Jews, to saturate the linen, in which the bodies of the dead were wrapped, with the preparation of spicy perfumes, and then to closely swathe the corpse, it must have been a matter of time and difficulty, on account of the glue-like clinging of the linen, to remove it from the body.

Yet, though Nicodemus had bought (perhaps unknown to the women of Galilee) a hundred pounds weight of rich aloes and myrrh, and used it in swathing the body of Jesus at its burial, these linen clothes were found not only removed but carefully disposed in order when the disciples of Jesus first visited the sepulchre. How does this fact agree with the story that the disciples had come by night, and hastily stolen away the body, while the Roman guard were all sleeping, but liable to awake any moment?

† The fact that the women were able, after seeing the end of the burial, to reach the city in season to purchase the additional spices required before sunset, proves that the body of the Redeemer lay in the tomb a

During these transactions, the chief priests and Pharisees, remembering that Jesus had more than once predicted his own resurrection, came to the governor and informed him of it; begging, at the same time, that a guard might be placed at the sepulchre, lest his disciples should carry away the body and affirm that he was risen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called the next day that followed, by the evangelists, because the Jewish day began at sunset.

This request being thought reasonable by Pilate, he gave them leave to take as many soldiers as they pleased out of the cohort, which, at the feast, came from the castle of Antonia and kept guard of the porticoes of the temple. For that they were not Jewish but Roman soldiers whom the priests employed to watch the sepulchre, is evident from their asking them of the governor. Besides, when the soldiers returned with the news of our Saviour's resurrection, the priests desired them to

part of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and (according to Jewish reckoning) a large part of Sunday—*i. e.*, from sunset of Saturday till near the morning dawn of Sunday, or the first day of the week. It may be said this is not literally "three days and three nights." Matt. xii. 40. Be it so: but is it the part of candor or good sense to press a popular expression of this sort into a LITERAL interpretation? Even the enemies of Jesus, when applying to Pilate after sunset for a Roman guard, did not ask for it beyond the "third day;" thus showing how such expressions as "after three days were generally understood. Matt. xxvii. 62-66.

Had the gospel of Matthew been a fabrication we may be sure he would have so framed it as to avoid all such apparent discrepancies. But a witness who aims to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is not anxious to avoid them, for native honesty is always artless. If rigorous scientific precision of language is demanded in popular phrases, why not be consistent, and say that Jesus never was buried at all "in the heart of the earth?" Happily, there is yet common sense in the world

report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept, and, to encourage them to tell the falsehood boldly, promised that, if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods should be used to pacify him and deliver them from any punishment—a promise which there was no need of making to their own servants.

The priests, having thus obtained a guard of Roman soldiers, men long accustomed to military duties, and therefore the most proper for watching the body, set out with them to the sepulchre, and, to prevent these guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their post, and sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.

Thus, what was designed to expose the mission and doctrine of Jesus as rank falsehood and vile imposture proved, in fact, the strongest confirmation of the truth and divinity of the same that could possibly be given, and placed what they wanted to refute (which was his resurrection from the dead) even beyond a doubt.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TWO PIOUS WOMEN GO TO VIEW THE SEPULCHRE OF THEIR CRUCIFIED LORD AND SAVIOUR—AN AWFUL PHENOMENON HAPPENS—A MINISTERING SPIRIT DESCENDS—THE REDEEMER BURSTS THE CHAIN OF DEATH AND RISES FROM THE TOMB.

VERY early in the morning, after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary,* came to visit the sepulchre, in order to embalm our Lord's body; for the performance of which they had, in concert with several other women from Galilee, brought ointments and spices. But before they reached the sepulchre there was a great earthquake preceding the most memorable event that ever happened among the children of men, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead. "For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it: his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men:" they fled into the city, and the Saviour of the world rose from the dead.†

* Mary, the wife of Cleopas and mother of James and Joses.

† There is in Isaiah xxvi. 19 a remarkable prophecy, in which the Messiah is represented as the speaker: "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise," etc. Now the evangelist Matthew records a fact, which seems the exact accomplishment of this prediction. He mentions it in connection with the earthquake at the death of Jesus, but it evidently belongs more to the earthquake at his

The angel, who had till then sat upon the stone, quitted his station and entered into the sepulchre. In the meantime, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were still on their way to the place, together with Salome, who joined them on the road. As they proceeded on their way, they consulted among themselves with regard to the method of putting their design of embalming the body of their Master into execution; particularly with respect to the enormous stone which they had seen placed there, with the utmost difficulty, two days before. "Who," said they, "shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" But, in the midst of this deliberation about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design (for it does not appear they knew any thing of the guard), they lifted up their eyes and perceived it was already rolled away.

Alarmed at so extraordinary and unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluded that the stone could not have been rolled away without some design, and that those who rolled it away could have no other intent than that of removing our Lord's body. Imagining, by appearances, that they had really done so, she ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John of what she had seen, and what she suspected; leaving Mary and

resurrection. "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints, which slept, arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

These appear to have been the first, after Jesus himself, who arose from the dead to immortal life. They seem not to have again dwelt among mortal men, but after appearing awhile, like their risen Lord, in the circles of their friends, probably ascended with him to the world of glory to grace his triumph over the grave.

Salome there, that, if the other women should arrive during her absence, they might acquaint them with their surprise at finding the stone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apostles of it.

In the meantime, the soldiers, who were terrified at seeing an awful messenger from on high roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre and open it in quality of a servant, fled into the city and informed the Jewish rulers of these miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief priests, as it was a proof of our Saviour's resurrection that could not be denied: they therefore resolved to stifle it immediately, and, accordingly, bribed the soldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publish everywhere that his disciples had stolen the body out of the sepulchre.

While Mary Magdalene was going to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the body taken away, Mary and Salome continued advancing toward the place, and at their arrival found what they expected—the body of their beloved Master gone from the sepulchre, where it had been deposited by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea—but at the same time beheld, to their great astonishment, a beautiful young man in shining raiment, very glorious to behold, sitting on the right side of the sepulchre.

Matthew tells us that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone and frightened away the guards from the sepulchre. It seems he had now laid aside the terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in order that these pious women, who had accompanied our Saviour during

the greatest part of the time of his public ministry, might be as little terrified as possible.

But, notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back, when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them, in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand. "Fear not," said he, "for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said;" and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre and view the place where the Son of God had lain; that is, to look on the linen clothes, and the napkin that had been about his head, and which he had left behind him when he arose from the dead; for to look at the place in any other view would not have tended to confirm their faith of his resurrection. The women, greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as the peculiar accent with which this blessed messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, went down into the sepulchre, when, behold, another of the angelic choir appeared.* They did not, however,

* Our author has here blended persons and incidents which belong apart. He does not seem to notice that there were two distinct companies of women who, independently of each other, prepared spices and visited the sepulchre. The first company was composed of Mary Magdalene, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee. The second company was led by Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. Mary Magdalene left her two companions when she ran back to apprise the disciples of the opening of the tomb; and they entered it at the invitation of the angel, and by him were sent away quickly to announce the resurrection of the Lord. But their fears overcame them so on the way that they hesitated, "and told no man any thing" until long afterward. Meantime Peter and John came in haste and examined the tomb, saw the shroud and the napkin but nothing more, and departed. Mary Magdalene alone remains, and to her Jesus first appears.

Jesus, having sent her to his brethren with his message of love, appears

yet seem to give sufficient credit to what was told them by the angel; and therefore the other gently reproved them for seeking the living among the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not remembering the words which their great Master himself had told them with regard to his own resurrection: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

When the women had satisfied their minds by looking at the place where the Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen clothes, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad tidings of his Master's resurrection from the dead; that he was going before them to Galilee; and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him.

The reason why the disciples were ordered to go into

to the two women (Mary Cleopas and Salome), who were still lingering through fear; salutes and soothes them, and even permits them to embrace his feet to assure them of the reality of his resurrection. 'Then, and not till then, "they ran with joy to bring his disciples word."

During this interval, Joanna, with the second company of women, bearing ointment and spices for embalming, arrives (probably from a more remote part of the city), finds the sepulchre open, and enters it. Two angels appear to this company, instead of one, reprove their unbelief and forgetfulness of the words of Jesus in Galilee, and leave them with this admonition, to return to the city of their own accord, and give intelligence of what they have seen and heard to the assembled disciples.

Here then are four distinct messages brought by the women; the first by Mary Magdalene, the second by her two companions, the third by Mary Magdalene after seeing the risen Saviour, and the fourth by Joanna and her friends. In Luke xxiv. 10 they are all mentioned together.

Galilee, to meet their great and beloved Master, seems to be this : they were most of them at Jerusalem, celebrating the passover; and it may be easily imagined that, on receiving the news of their Lord's resurrection, many, if not all, would resolve to tarry at Jerusalem, in expectation of meeting him there; a thing that must have proved of great detriment to them at that time of the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first-fruits being always offered on the second day of the passover week. In order, therefore, to prevent their staying so long from home, the message was sent directing them to return into Galilee, with full assurance that they should there have the pleasure of seeing their Lord and Master, and by that means have all their doubts removed, and be fully convinced that he had patiently undergone all his sufferings for the sins of mankind. The women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's resurrection, left the sepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the disciples the glad tidings.

During these transactions at the sepulchre, Peter and John, having been informed by Mary Magdalene that the stone was rolled away and the body of Jesus not to be found, were hastening to the grave, and missed the women who had seen the appearance of angels.

The two disciples, being astonished at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and desirous of having their doubts cleared up, made all possible haste to the sepulchre; and John, being younger than Peter, arrived at the place first, but did not go in, contenting himself with stooping down and seeing the linen clothes lying which had been wrapped about the Saviour's body. Peter soon arrived, and went into the sepulchre, where he saw the

linen clothes, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Our Lord left the grave-clothes in the sepulchre, probably, to show that his body was not stolen away by his disciples, who, in such a case, would not have taken time to strip it. Besides, the circumstance of the grave-clothes induced the disciples themselves to believe, when the resurrection was related to them. But at that time they had no suspicion that he was risen from the dead.

These two disciples, having thus satisfied themselves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, departed ; but Mary, who had returned, remained weeping at the door of the sepulchre. She had, it seems, followed Peter and John to the garden, but did not leave it with them, being anxious to find the body. Accordingly, stepping down into the place to examine it once more, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They were now in the same position as when they appeared to the other women, but had rendered themselves invisible while Peter and John were at the sepulchre.

Mary, on beholding these heavenly messengers dressed in the robes of light was greatly terrified. But they, in the most endearing accents, asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou ? To which she answered, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." On pronouncing these words, she turned herself about, and saw Jesus standing near her ; but the terror she was in, and the garments in which he was now dressed, prevented her from knowing him

for some time. Jesus repeated the same question used before by the angel. "Woman, why weepest thou?" To which Mary, who now supposed him to be the gardener, answered, Sir, if his body be troublesome in the sepulchre, and thou hast removed him, tell me where he is deposited, and I will take him away. But our blessed Saviour, willing to remove her anxiety, called her by name, with his usual tone of voice; on which she immediately knew him, and, falling down before him, would have embraced his knees, according to that modesty and reverence with which the women of the East saluted the men, especially those who were their superiors in station. But Jesus refused this compliment, telling her that he was not going immediately into heaven. He was often to show himself to the disciples before he ascended; so that she would have frequent opportunities of testifying her regard to him. And, at the same time, he said to her, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Thus did the blessed Jesus contemplate, with a singular pleasure, the work of redemption he had just finished. The happy relation between God and man, which had been long cancelled by sin, was now renewed.

The kindness of this message sent by our dear Redeemer to his disciples, will appear above all praise, if we remember their late behavior. They had every one of them forsaken him in the greatest extremity; when he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers, derided by his countrymen, and spitefully treated by all, they hid themselves in some place of safety, and preferred their own security to the deliverance of their

Master. When he fainted under the burden of his cross, none of them were there to assist him. Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the Roman soldiers to ease him of his ponderous burden. But notwithstanding they had refused to assist their Master during his sufferings for the sins of the world, he graciously, he freely forgave them; he assured them of their pardon, and called them even by the endearing name of brethren.

How different was the conduct of the women! Laying aside the weakness and timidity natural to their sex, they showed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occasion. For in contradiction to those of the Jews, who so vehemently required Jesus to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence by tears, cries, and lamentations, when they saw him led forth to suffer on Mount Calvary; accompanied him to the cross, the most infamous of all punishments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the consolation in their power, though at the same time the sight of his sufferings pierced them to the heart; and when he expired and his body was carried off, they accompanied him to his grave, not despairing, though they found he had not delivered himself, but to appearance was conquered by death, the universal enemy of mankind. Perhaps these pious women entertained some faint hopes that he would still revive. Or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at least cherished a strong degree of love for their Lord, and determined to do him all the honor in their power.

A faith so remarkably strong, a love so ardent, and a fortitude so unshaken, could not fail of receiving distinguished marks of the divine approbation; and they

were accordingly honored with the first news of Christ's resurrection, had their eyes cheered with the first sight of their beloved Lord after he rose, and preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves.

The women, on their arrival, told as many of the disciples as they could find, that they had seen at the sepulchre the appearance of angels, who assured them that Jesus was risen from the dead.* This new information astonished the disciples exceedingly; and, as they had before sent Peter and John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them concerning the body being removed out of the sepulchre, so they now judged it highly proper to send some of their number to see the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of that great transaction of which the women had given them an account. That this was really the case appears from what the disciples, in their journey to Emmaus, told their great Lord and Master; namely, that when the women came and told them that they had seen the angels, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and "found it even as the women had said, but him they saw not."

The second deputation from the apostles did not go alone; for, as Mary Magdalene returned to the sepulchre with Peter and John, who were sent to examine the truth of her information, so the women who brought an account of the appearance of angels, in all probability,

* The women here referred to must be Joanna and her company, as they had not seen Jesus but only the angel. Hence, it appears that Salome and Mary Cleopas did not arrive till some time after them, for the reasons assigned in the preceding note, page 449.

returned with those who were sent to be witnesses of the truth of their report. Besides curiosity, they had an errand thither: the angels had expressly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular; for which reason, when they understood that he was gone to the sepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the disciples to seek him.

About the time that the disciples and women set out for the sepulchre, Peter and John reached the city, but, passing through a different street, did not meet their brethren. The disciples, having a great desire to reach the place, soon left the women behind; and, just as they arrived, Mary Magdalene, having seen the Lord, was coming away. But they did not meet her, perhaps, because they entered the garden at one door, while she was coming out at another. When they came to the sepulchre, they saw the angels, and received from them the news of their blessed Master's resurrection; for St. Luke tells us, "They found it even as the women had said." Highly elated with what they saw, they departed, and ran back to the city with such expedition that they gave an account of what they had seen in the hearing of the two disciples before Mary Magdalene arrived.

In the meantime, the first company of women, who followed the disciples, happened to meet Peter and John. But they had not gone far from the sepulchre before Jesus himself met them, and said, "All hail!"* On which they approached their great Lord and Master, held him by the feet, and worshipped him. The favor of embracing his knees Jesus had before refused to Mary Magdalene, because it was not then necessary; but he

* See note on page 449.

granted it to the women, because, the angels' words having strongly impressed their minds with the notion of his resurrection, they might have taken his appearance for an illusion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to touch him and convince themselves, by the united reports of their senses, that he was their great Lord and Master, who was then risen from the dead after having suffered on the cross for the sins of mankind.*

This company of pious women, having tarried some time with Jesus on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Master's resurrection till some time after Peter and John, and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unless we suppose that she arrived a few minutes before them.

The disciples were now lost in astonishment at what the women had related: they considered the account they had before given them, of their having seen the angels, as an improbability, and now they seem to have considered this as something worse; for the evangelist tells us that they "believed them not."†

* By referring to the note on page 449 the reader will perceive that this company of women is not that of Joanna but that of Salome, consisting only of herself and Mary, the wife of Cleopas.

† The harmony of the four evangelists, in their brief and independent accounts of the women of Galilee on this eventful morning, is singularly perfect and beautiful, and will be understood and admired in proportion as it is carefully studied. All the old difficulties arose from supposing the two companies of women to be one and the same. From the time of Gilbert West and Dr. Doddridge, in the first half of the last century, there has been a general agreement of critics on this point.

Modern infidels, who bring forward again the old, obsolete objections to this part of the sacred narrative, are entirely behind the age, and only betray their ignorance or disingenuousness. After all, the testimony of

Peter, indeed, to whom the angel had sent the message, was disposed, by his sanguine temper, to give a little more credit to their words than the rest; possibly because the messengers from the heavenly world had done him the honor of naming him in particular. Elated with the respect thus paid him, he immediately repaired again to the sepulchre; hoping, in all probability, that his Master would appear to him, or, at least, the angel who had so particularly distinguished him from the rest of his disciples.* As soon as Peter arrived at the sepulchre, he stooped down, and seeing the linen clothes lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which they were laid, and returned, wondering greatly in himself at what had happened.

the women is not that on which our Christian faith rests. It is true, but it did not carry conviction to the apostles themselves. Indeed its chief value lies just here, that it proves that the apostles, the proper witnesses, were not credulous men, but men who diligently inquired for the truth, and even pushed their doubts to an unjustifiable extreme. The evidence which satisfied such men, and made them conscientiously devote every earthly interest to the service of their risen Redeemer and the salvation of their fellow men, is that on which our Christian faith relies; "God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Heb. ii. 4.

* Our own impression of the feelings of Peter at this time is quite different from the view here given. We cannot imagine him to have so easily recovered from the profound grief into which he was plunged by his reflections on his recent denial of his Lord. It seems to us we have no right to regard him as elated by the particular mention of his name in the angelic message. His humiliation was such that it inspired anxiety as well as hope. He longed to see his Lord chiefly to make full confession and be assured of pardon.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JESUS APPEARS, ON DIVERS OCCASIONS, TO DIFFERENT DISCIPLES—REPROVES AND CONVINCES THOMAS OF HIS UNBELIEF—SHOWS HIMSELF TO A GREAT NUMBER OF HIS FOLLOWERS IN GALILEE.

SOON after the women's first return to the disciples with the news of their having seen the appearance of angels who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead, two of the disciples departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles distant from Jerusalem.* The concern they were in on account of the death of their great and beloved Master was sufficiently visible in their countenances; and, as they pursued their journey, talking one with another, and debating about the things that had lately happened among them, concerning the life and doctrine, the sufferings and death, of the holy Jesus, and of the report that was just spread among his disciples of his being that very morning risen from the dead, Jesus himself overtook them, and joined company with them.

As he appeared like a stranger,† they did not in the

* What drew these two disciples to Emmaus on a day so full of profound interest to them as well as others, we cannot tell with certainty, but most probably it was the home of one or both.

† Mark speaks of him as assuming on this occasion "another form." This may mean no more than the change made in his appearance by a garb which he was not accustomed to wear, and in which he was not easily recognized by the downcast disciples.

least suspect that their fellow-traveller was no other than the great Redeemer of the sons of men. He soon entered into discourse with them, by inquiring what event had so closely engaged them in conversation, and why they appeared so sorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with some heavy disappointment. One of them, whose name was Cleophas, being surprised at the question, replied, Is it possible that you can be so great a stranger to the affairs of the world as to have been at Jerusalem and not have heard the surprising events that have happened there—events that have astonished the whole city, and are now the constant topic of conversation among all the inhabitants?

Jesus asked what surprising events he meant. To which Cleophas replied, The transactions which have happened concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared as a great prophet and teacher sent from God, and accordingly was highly venerated among the people for the excellency of his doctrine, his humility of life, and the number, benefit, and greatness of his miracles. Our chief priests and elders, therefore, envying him as one who lessened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death. But we firmly believed he would have proved himself the Messiah, or great Deliverer; and this persuasion we a long time supported; nor were we willing to abandon it even when we saw him put to death. But it is now three days since these things were done; and therefore we begin to fear we were mistaken. This very morning, indeed, a thing happened which extremely surprised us, and we were very solicitous with regard to it. Some women, who had entertained the same hopes and expect-

tations as we, going early in the morning to pay the last duties to their Master, by embalming his body, returned with great haste to the city, and informed us that they had been at the sepulchre, but were disappointed in not finding the body; and, to increase our surprise, they added that they had seen the appearance of angels, who had told them that Jesus was risen from the dead. This relation seemed at first to us not probable, nay, altogether incredible; but two of the company, going immediately after to the sepulchre, found every thing exactly as the women had reported: they saw the angels, but heard not any thing of the body; so that we are still in doubt and perplexity with regard to this wonderful event.

In reply, Jesus said, Why are ye so very averse to believe all that the prophets have, with one voice, predicted of the Messiah? Is it not clearly and very expressly foretold, in all the prophetic writings, that it was appointed by the council of Omnipotence for the Messiah to suffer in this manner, and that, after sustaining the greatest indignities, reproaches, and contempt, from the malice and perverseness of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, he should be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom? Having said this, he began at the writings of Moses and explained to them, in order, all the principal passages, both in the books of that great legislator and the writings of the other prophets, relating to himself, his own sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection.

And this he did with such surprising plainness, clearness, and strength, that the two disciples, not yet suspecting who he was, were as much amazed to find a

stranger so well acquainted with all that Jesus did and suffered as they at first wondered at his appearing to be so totally ignorant of these transactions. They were also astonished to hear him interpret and apply the Scriptures to their present purpose with such readiness and convincing clearness of argument as carried with it a strange and unusual authority and efficacy. When, therefore, they came to the village whither they were going, and Jesus seemed as if he would have passed on and travelled farther, they, desirous of his company, pressed him, in the strongest manner, to tarry with them that night, as it was then late. To this request the great Redeemer of mankind consented; and when they were sat down to supper he took bread, and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them in the same manner he used to do while he conversed with them upon earth before his death. This engaged their attention, and, looking steadfastly on him, they perceived it was their great and beloved Master. But they had then no time to express their joy and astonishment to their benevolent Redeemer; for he immediately vanished out of their sight.

As soon as they found their Master was departed, they said one to another, How slow and stupid were we before, not to know him upon the road, while he explained to us the Scriptures—when, besides the affability of his discourse and the strength and clearness of his argument, we perceived such an authority in what he said, and such a powerful efficacy attending his words, and even striking our hearts with affection, that we could not but have known him (if we had not been remarkably stupid) to have been the very same that used to accompany his

teaching and was peculiar to it! This surprising event would not permit them to stay any longer in Emmaus. They returned that very night to Jerusalem, and found the apostles, with several other disciples, discoursing about the resurrection of their Master; and, on their entering the room, the disciples accosted them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.*

They had given little credit to the reports of the women, supposing they were occasioned more by imagination than reality. But, when a person of Peter's capacity and gravity declared he had seen the Lord, they began to think that he was really risen from the dead. And their belief was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, who declared to their brethren how Jesus appeared to them on the road, and how they discovered him to be their Master by the circumstances before related. While the disciples from Emmaus were thus describing the manner of the appearance of Jesus to them, and offering arguments to convince those who doubted the truth of it, their great Master himself put an end to the debate, by standing in the midst of them, and saying, "Peace be unto you."

This sudden appearance of our blessed Saviour greatly terrified the disciples, who supposed they had seen a spirit;† for, having secured the doors of the house where

* There were two Simons among the apostles—Simon Peter and Simon of Cana, called the Cananite. The evidence is plain that here, as in most cases, it refers to Simon Peter. In 1 Cor. xv. 5, Paul calls him by his surname of Cephas.

† Probably the idea of a *spirit* (or phantom) entertained by the apostles was as vague as it now is in the popular imagination of a *ghost*, *i. e.*

they were assembled, for fear of the Jews, and Jesus having opened the locks, by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the house, it was natural for them to think that a spirit only could enter. The circumstance, therefore, of the doors being shut is very happily mentioned by St. John; because it suggests a reason why the disciples took their Master for a spirit, notwithstanding many of them were convinced that he was really risen from the dead and were at that moment conversing about his resurrection. But, to dispel their fears and doubts, Jesus came forward and spoke to them in the most endearing manner, showed them his hands and feet, and desired them to handle him, in order to convince themselves, by the united powers of their different senses, that it was he himself, and no spectre or apparition. "Why are ye troubled," said the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."* These infallible

a bodiless apparition of a real active being, representing the form of one dead. In this last circumstance it differs from an angel. Like every thing strange and mysterious to us, it naturally inspires awe and alarm.

The vision of Eliphaz, in Job iv. 12-17, is strikingly illustrative of this conception and of its effects.

* The apostles had as yet no idea of the powers of the resurrection-body, and the sudden appearance in the room, by night, of a figure resembling that of Jesus, struck them with instinctive terror, and this gave place only by slow degrees to the strongest evidence of his bodily identity. To behold that very form which a few days before they had seen nailed to the cross and pierced by the soldier's spear, and then taken from the cross and laid, mangled, motionless, and lifeless, in the sepulchre, now alive, vigorous and active as ever, every wound healed, every feature restored to its former familiar expression, every sense exalted and instinct

proofs sufficiently convinced the disciples of the truth of their Lord's resurrection; and they received him with rapture and exultation. But their joy and wonder had so great an effect upon their minds, that some of them, sensible of the great commotion they were in, suspended their belief till they had considered the matter more calmly. Jesus, therefore, knowing their thoughts, called for meat, and ate with them, in order to prove more fully the truth of his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his presence with them on this occasion.

After giving this further ocular demonstration of his having vanquished the power of death and opened the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his salutation, "Peace be unto you;" adding, The same commission that my Father hath given unto me I give unto you: go ye, therefore, into every part of the world and preach the gospel to all the children of men. Then, breathing on them, he said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, to direct and assist you in the execution of your commission. Whosoever embraces your doctrine, sin-

with the immortality of a higher world, yet capable of sympathy and social intercourse with men in the flesh—all this was too great, too marvellous to be taken into the human mind in a moment with entire conviction. The change was stupendous. They had seen more than once the dead raised to life by the voice of Jesus, but that life was mortal as before. This, therefore, was a fact entirely new, without precedent, and infinitely astonishing. Only as its reality became clear could it become also delightful, elevating, assimilating. Jesus stood before them, gazed on them, spoke to them, ate and drank with them, gave them leave to handle him, and satisfy themselves that it was he indeed—their unchanging Friend, their forgiving Saviour, their condescending Teacher, the Resurrection and the Life, the triumphant Conqueror of Death, the First-Fruits of the coming harvest of Glory from the grave!

cerely repents, and believes on me, ye shall declare unto him the free forgiveness of his sins, and your declaration shall be ratified and confirmed in the courts of heaven. And whosoever either obstinately rejects your doctrine, disobeys it, or behaves himself unworthily after he hath embraced it, his sins shall not be forgiven him; but the censure ye shall pass upon him on earth shall be confirmed in heaven.

Thomas, otherwise called Didymus, was absent at the meeting of the apostles; nor did this happen without the special direction of Providence, that the particular and extraordinary satisfaction which was afterward granted him might be an abundant and undeniable testimony of the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection to all succeeding generations. The rest of the apostles, therefore, told him that they had seen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had delivered in their hearing. But Thomas replied, This event is of such great importance, that unless, to prevent all possibility of deception, I see him with mine own eyes and feel him with mine own hands, putting my fingers into the print of the nails whereby he was fastened to the cross, and thrust my hand into his side which the soldiers pierced with the spear, I will not believe that he is really and truly risen from the dead.

Thus have we enumerated, in the most explicit manner, the transactions of that day on which the great Redeemer of mankind arose from the dead; a day highly to be remembered by the children of men, throughout all generations. A day, in which was fully completed and displayed the conceptions lodged in the breast of infinite Wisdom! even those thoughts of love

and mercy, on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have therefore the highest reason to solemnize this day with gladness, each returning week, by ceasing from their labor, and giving up themselves to prayer, pious meditations, and other exercises of religion. The redemption of mankind, which they weekly commemorate, affords matter for eternal thought; it is a subject impossible to be equalled, and whose lustre neither length of time, nor frequent reviewing, can either tarnish or diminish.

Eight days after the resurrection of our great Redeemer, the blessed Jesus showed himself again to his disciples, while Thomas was with them, and upbraided that disciple for his unbelief; but, knowing that it did not, like that of the Pharisees, proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honest heart, and a sincere desire of being satisfied of the truth, he thus addressed himself to his doubting disciple: "Thomas," said he, "since thou wilt not be contented to rely on the testimony of others, but must be convinced by the experience of thine own senses, behold the wounds in my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and doubt no longer of the reality of my resurrection." Thomas was immediately induced to believe, by the invitation of his dear Master, and being fully satisfied, he cried out, "I am abundantly convinced; thou art indeed my Lord, the very same that was crucified; and I acknowledge thine almighty power in having triumphed over death, and worship thee as my God." To which the blessed Jesus replied, "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the dead. But blessed are they, who, without such

evidence of the senses, shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe and embrace a doctrine which tends so greatly to the glory of God and the salvation of the sons of men."

St. Luke adds (Acts i. 3), that the blessed Jesus appeared on several other occasions to his disciples after his resurrection, and by many clear and infallible proofs (not mentioned by the evangelist), fully convinced them that he was alive after his passion. But those which are mentioned are abundantly sufficient to excite men to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the great Messiah so often foretold by the ancient prophets; and by means of that belief they may attain everlasting life in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our blessed Saviour having, first by the angels, and afterward in person, ordered his disciples to repair to their respective habitations in Galilee, it is reasonable to think they would leave Jerusalem as soon as possible. This they accordingly did, and, on their arrival at their respective places of abode, applied themselves to their usual occupations; and the apostles returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake of Tiberias. Here they were toiling with their nets very early in the morning, and saw Jesus standing on the shore, but did not then know him to be their Master, as it was somewhat dark, and they at a considerable distance from him. He, however, called to them, and asked if they had taken any fish. To which they answered they had caught nothing. He then desired them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat, and they should not be disappointed. The disciples, imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fishing, did as

he directed them, and enclosed in their net such a prodigious multitude of fishes that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them toward the shore.

It seems they had toiled all the preceding night to no purpose; and therefore such remarkable success could not fail of causing various conjectures among them with regard to the stranger on the shore, who had given them such happy advice. Some of the apostles declared they could not imagine who he was; but others were persuaded that this person was no other than their great and beloved Master. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter, who, making no doubt of it, girded on his fisher's coat and leaped into the sea, in order to get ashore sooner than the boat could be brought to land, dragging after it a net full of large fishes.

When the disciples came ashore, they found a fire kindled, and on it a fish broiling, and near it some bread. But, neither being sufficient for the company, Jesus bade them bring some of the fish they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did the blessed Jesus prove again to his disciples the reality of his resurrection; not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle like that which, at the beginning of his ministry, had made such an impression upon them as disposed them to be his constant followers. This was the third time that Jesus appeared publicly to a great number of his disciples in a body, besides showing himself several times to particular persons upon special occasions.

When they had eaten, Jesus reminded Peter how dili-

gent and zealous he ought to be in order to wipe off the stain of his denying him when he was carried before the high-priest :* “Simon, son of Jonas,” said our blessed Saviour to him, “art thou more zealous and affectionate in thy love toward me than the rest of my disciples?” To which Peter answered, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” He was taught modesty and diffidence by his late fall, and therefore would not compare himself with others, but humbly appealed to his Master’s omniscience for the sincerity of his regard to him. Jesus answered, “Express then thy love toward me by the care of my flock committed to thy charge. ‘Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.’ Show thy love to me by publishing the great salvation I have accomplished, and feeding the souls of faithful believers with that food which never perishes, but endures forever and ever. I well know, indeed,” continued the blessed Jesus, “that thou wilt continue my faithful shepherd even unto death. For the time will come when thou, who now girdest on thy fisher’s coat voluntarily, and stretchest out thy hand to come to me, shalt in thine old age be girt by others, and forced to stretch out thy hands against thy will, in a very different manner, for the sake of thy constant profession of my religion.”

By these last words Jesus signified the manner of Peter’s death, and that he should finally suffer martyrdom for the glory of God and testimony of the truth of the Christian religion.†

The time being now come when the disciples were to meet their great Lord and Master, according to the mes-

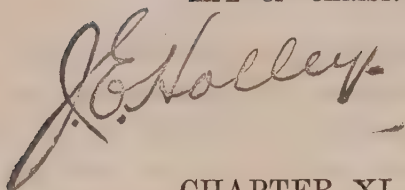
* See note, page 400.

† See note, page 523.

sages he had sent them by the women, and, in all probability, appointed at some former appearance not mentioned by the evangelists, the brethren set out for the mountain in Galilee—perhaps that on which he was transfigured.* Here five hundred of them were gathered together, expecting the joyful sight of their great Master after he had triumphed over death and the grave, some of them not having yet seen him after his resurrection.

They did not wait long before Jesus appeared, on which they were seized with rapture, their hearts overflowed with gladness, they approached their kind, their benevolent Master, and worshipped him. Some few, indeed, doubted—it being natural for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wished, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys, which vanish like a morning cloud. But Jesus afterward appeared frequently to them and gave them full satisfaction, and instructed them in many things relating to their preaching the gospel, establishing the church, and spreading it through the whole earth.

* It seems to have been the chief design of Christ, in his third appearing, to restore Peter to the public position he had forfeited by his fall, before delivering the general commission at the appointed meeting in Galilee.



CHAPTER XL.

OUR BLESSED LORD INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES IN WHAT MANNER THEY SHOULD CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN ORDER TO PROPAGATE THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL—GIVES THEM HIS FINAL BLESSING AND ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN—GENERAL REVIEW OF THE LIFE AND DOCTRINES OF THE GREAT REDEEMER.

A FEW days before the feast of Pentecost, or the “feast of weeks,” the disciples went up to Jerusalem, where the blessed Jesus made his last appearance to them ; and, after instructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God and the manner they were to behave themselves in propagating the doctrines of the gospel, he put them in mind that, during his abode with them in Galilee, he had often told them that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning him, were to be exactly accomplished. At the same time, “he opened their understandings” by divine illumination, he removed their prejudices by the operation of his Spirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, strengthened their judgments, and enabled them to discern the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Having thus qualified them for receiving the truth, he again assured them that both Moses and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to suffer in the very manner he had suffered ; that he was to rise from the dead on the third day, as he had done ; and that repent-

ance and remission of sins were to be preached in the Messiah's name among all nations, beginning with the Jews in Jerusalem.

He next delivered unto them their commission to preach the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, and to testify unto the world the exact accomplishment in him of all things foretold concerning the Messiah, and, to enable them to perform this important work, promised to bestow on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, which he called the promise of his Father—because the Almighty had promised it by his prophets.*

Having thus strengthened them for the important work they were going to undertake, he led them out to the Mount of Olives, as far as Bethany; where, standing on a hill above the town,† he told them that he was

* It has been justly remarked, and the remark is worthy of profound consideration, that as the promise of Christ was the great promise of the Old Testament, so the promise of the Holy Spirit is the great promise of the New.

† From the highest point of the Mount of Olives, the very spot from which our Lord in all probability ascended to heaven, there is one of the most wide and magnificent prospects in Palestine. On the east, our Lord would behold at his feet the village of Bethany, the house of Martha, and the tomb from which he had raised Lazarus to life; beyond, the Mount of his Temptation, and far down, the valley of the Jordan, with the blue line of the river in which he was baptized distinctly visible. The view was terminated at the south in the deep, dark waters of the Dead Sea; and on the eastern limit of the horizon the crests of the mountains of Moab. On the west, objects of nearer and more tender interest naturally riveted his eye, in its last look on earth. There, to the south, was Bethlehem his birthplace, with all its touching associations, and directly before him Jerusalem—the temple, purged and hallowed by his ministry, the palaces of the high-priest, of Herod, and of Pilate, where he was so recently tried and cruelly condemned; Calvary, where he was crucified; the tomb of

going to ascend to his Father; for which reason they might go courageously through all the world and preach the gospel to every rational creature; that they who believed should be admitted into his church by the rite of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and be taught, in consequence of their baptism, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined upon them; that such baptized believers should receive the pardon of their sins, together with eternal life in the happy mansions of his Father's kingdom, but such as refused to embrace the doctrines of the gospel should be forever excluded from those happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; that while they were employed in this work he would be constantly with them, to assist them by his Spirit and protect them by his providence. Finally, that those who should, through their preaching, be induced to believe, should themselves work most astonishing miracles, by which the gospel should be propagated with the greatest rapidity. Mark xvi. 17, 18.*

Joseph, where he was buried, and whence he rose, the Vanquisher of Death. For the last time he had crossed the valley of the Kedron, and left behind him at the foot of Olivet the garden of Gethsemane, the scene of his terrible agony, and the dark background of a prospect rising upward to the height of the eternal Paradise above.

Can we wonder if, full of tender emotion at the sight of these affecting objects, he should turn his eyes once more on the faces of his disciples and stretch out his hands and bless them?

* Few readers of this passage, perhaps, have failed to ponder, at times, the mooted question of the extent and duration of the promise it involves. Were *all* believers to be characterized by these signs following in *every* age?

We think not. The terms of the promise are satisfied if the first believers were generally endowed with such gifts, and if these gifts

When the blessed Jesus had spoken these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And in the action of blessing them he was parted from them: in the midst of the day a shining cloud received him out of their sight; that is, this brilliant cloud encompassed him about and carried him up to heaven, not suddenly, but at leisure, that they might behold him departing, and see the proofs of his ascending into heaven, as he had promised them. The cloud in which the blessed Jesus ascended was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame, being, as is supposed, no other than the Shekinah, or glory of the Lord—the visible symbol of the divine presence which had so often appeared to the patriarchs of old, which filled the tem-

continued to be granted during the apostolic age. Our reasons for this conclusion are: 1. We read of *no* such gifts of miracles except under the immediate ministry of the apostles. Philip, the evangelist, had received these gifts at Jerusalem, and exercised them in Samaria, but could not confer them, as did Peter on his arrival there. Acts viii. 2. They do not appear to have been universally bestowed, even by the hands of the apostles themselves. 1 Cor. 12-14. Hence, 3, it would follow that in the generation succeeding the death of the last of the apostles they would be rare, and gradually cease to be exercised. 4. The facts in the history of the early church accord with this view: Christian writers in the latter part of the second century appeal to the miracles wrought in their time, but do not claim the power for themselves; and no authentic case of a miracle is reported in the third century.

Nor is this to be ascribed merely to a decay of faith. For, 1. The reason for them ceased after the divine origin of Christianity had been sufficiently proved. 2. Were such evidence now needed, and such inspired channels open to convey them, we might expect their continuance or renewal; but not otherwise. 3. These gifts are represented by Paul not only as far inferior in value to the graces of the heart, but as destined to vanish away, while faith, hope, and charity remain. 1 Cor. xiii. And, 4. The pretence of miraculous powers is one of the predicted signs of the Great Apostacy. 2 Thess. ii.; Rev. xiii. This fact should put us on our guard against imposture.

ple at its dedication, and which, in its greatest splendor, could not be beheld with mortal eyes, for which reason it is called the light inaccessible. As he ascended, the flaming cloud that surrounded him marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below, till it at last vanished, together with their beloved Master, out of their sight.

In this illustrious manner did the great Redeemer of mankind depart, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his Father to execute; which angels with joy described was to happen, and which, through all eternity to come, shall, at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight, by every inhabitant of heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such that no distance, however great, can lessen.

We shall conclude this chapter with a few observations on the general conduct of our blessed Redeemer during his abode with men on earth.

The human character of the blessed Jesus, as it results from the account given of him by the evangelists (for they have not formally drawn it up), is entirely different from that of all other men whatsoever; for whereas they have selfish passions deeply rooted in their breasts, and are influenced by them in almost every thing they do, Jesus was so entirely free from them that the most severe scrutiny cannot furnish one single action in the whole course of his life wherein he consulted his own interest only. No; he was influenced by very

different motives: the present happiness and eternal welfare of sinners regulated his conduct; and, while others followed their respective occupations, Jesus had no other business than that of doing the will of his Father, and promoting the happiness of the sons of men. Nor did he wait till he was solicited to extend his benevolent hand to the distressed: "he went about doing good," and always accounted it "more blessed to give than to receive;" resembling God rather than man. Benevolence was the very life of his soul: he not only did good to objects presented to him for relief, but he industriously sought them out, in order to extend his compassionate assistance.

It is common for persons of the most exalted faculties to be elated with success and applause, or dejected by censure and disappointments; but the blessed Jesus was never elated by the one or depressed by the other. He was never more courageous than when he met with the greatest opposition and cruel treatment, nor more humble than when the sons of men worshipped at his feet.

He came into the world inspired with the grandest purpose that ever was formed—that of saving from eternal perdition, not a single nation, but the whole world—and in the execution of it went through the longest and heaviest train of labors that ever was sustained, with a constancy and resolution on which no disadvantageous impression could be made by any accident whatever. Calumny, threatenings, bad success, with many other evils constantly attending him, served only to quicken his endeavors in this glorious enterprise, which he unceasingly pursued, even till he had finished it by his death.

The generality of mankind are prone to retaliate

injuries received, and all seem to take a satisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of those who oppress them; whereas the whole of Christ's labors breathed nothing but meekness, patience, and forgiveness, even to his bitterest enemies and in the midst of the most excruciating torments. The words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the cross, fitly express the temper which he maintained through the whole course of his life, even when assaulted by the heaviest provocation. He was destined to sufferings here below, in order that he might raise his people to honor, glory, and immortality in the realms of bliss above, and therefore patiently, yea, joyfully, submitted to all that the malice of earth and hell could inflict. He was vilified that we might be honored; he died that we might live forever and ever.

To conclude: the greatest and best men have discovered the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and shown them to have been nothing more than men; but it was otherwise with Jesus. He was superior to all the men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners and the perfection of his holiness. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

Whether we consider him as a teacher or as a man, "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His whole life was perfectly free from spot or weakness; at the same time, it was remarkable for the greatest and most extensive exercises of purity and goodness. But never to have committed the least sin in word or deed, never to have uttered any sentiment that could be cen-

sured, upon the various topics of religion and morality which were the daily subjects of his discourses, and that through the course of a life filled with action, and led under the observation of many enemies, who had always access to converse with him, and who often came to find fault, is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature; and consequently he who possessed it must have been divine.

Such was the Person who is the subject of the evangelical history. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine, and miracles, as they are here represented to him united in one series, has a clearer idea of these things than before, or observes a beauty in his actions thus linked together, which, taken separately, do not appear so fully—if he feels himself touched by the character of Jesus in general, or with any of his sermons or actions in particular, thus simply delineated in writing whose principal charms are the beauties of truth—above all, if his dying so generously for men strikes him with admiration, or fills him with hope, in the prospect of that pardon which is thereby purchased for the world—let him seriously consider with himself what improvements he ought to make of the divine goodness.

Jesus, by his death, hath set open the gate of immortality to the sons of men, and, by his word, spirit, and example, graciously offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us therefore remember that, being born under the dispensation of his gospel, we have, from our earliest years, enjoyed the best means of securing to ourselves an interest in that favor of God

which is life, and that loving kindness which is better than life.

We have been called to aspire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty, exhibited to mortal eyes in the man Christ Jesus, to fire us with the noblest ambition. His gospel teaches us that we are made for eternity, and that our present life is to our future existence as infancy to manhood. But, as in the former many things are to be learned, many hardships to be endured, many habits to be acquired, and that by a course of exercises which in themselves though painful, and possibly useless, to the child, yet are necessary to fit him for the business and enjoyments of manhood, so, while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardships to be endured, and habits to be acquired by a laborious discipline, which, however painful, must be undergone, because necessary to fit us for the employments and pleasures of our riper existence in the realms above; always remembering that, whatever our trials may be in this world, if we ask for God's assistance he has promised to give it. Inflamed, therefore, with the love of immortality and its joys, let us submit ourselves to our heavenly Teacher, and learn of him those lessons which alone can render life pleasant, death desirable, and fill our hearts with ecstatic joy

CHAPTER XLI.

REMARKS ON THE PECULIAR NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, THE PRINCIPLES IT INDUCTATES, AND ITS FITNESS TO RENDER MEN HOLY AND HUMBLE HERE, AND HAPPILY GLORIFIED HEREAFTER.

WE cannot close this delightful scene of the life of our dear Lord and Saviour more comfortably than by considering the benefits resulting from a due attendance to his doctrines by all who shall by faith receive and embrace the same. Probably none have been greater enemies to the progress of religion than those who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form, nor any guilty of a more injurious calumny against the gospel than those who represent its precepts as rigorous impositions and unnecessary restraints.

True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleasure, of public order, and private happiness. Christianity is the most excellent and the most useful institution, having the "promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." It is the voice of reason; it is also the language of Scripture, "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and our blessed Saviour himself assures us that his precepts are easy and the burden of his religion light.

The Christian religion is a rational service, a worship "in spirit and truth," a worship worthy of the majesty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to

pay. It comprehends all we ought to believe, and all we ought to practice; its positive rites are few, of plain and easy significancy, and manifestly adapted to establish a sense of our obligation to God. The gospel places religion, not in abstruse speculation and metaphysical subtleties, not in outward show and tedious ceremony, not in superstitious austerities and enthusiastic visions; but in purity of heart and holiness of life. The sum of our duty, according to our great Master himself, consists in the love of God and of our neighbor; according to St. Paul, in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world; according to St. James, in visiting the fatherless and widows in affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. This is the constant strain and tenor of the gospel. This it inculcates most earnestly, and on this it lays the greatest stress.

But is the Christian system only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined system of morality? No, certainly: it is a great deal more. It is an act of grace, a stupendous plan of Providence, designed for the recovery of mankind from a state of degradation and ruin to the favor of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality, through a Mediator.

Under this dispensation, true religion consists in "repentance toward God," and in "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," as the person appointed by the supreme authority of heaven and earth to reconcile apostate man to his offended Creator; as a Sacrifice for sin; our vital Head and governing Lord. This is religion, as we are Christians. And what hardship, what exaction, is there in

all this? Surely, none. Nay, the practice of religion is much easier than the servitude of sin.

Our rational powers, all will readily agree, are dreadfully impaired, and the soul weakened by sin. The animal passions are strong and corrupt, and oppose the dictates of the Spirit of God; objects of sense make powerful impressions on the mind. We are, in every situation, surrounded with many snares and temptations. In such a disordered state of things, we cannot please God till created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. We must be born again—born from above.

The God of all grace has planted in the human breast a quick sense of good and evil—a faculty which strongly dictates right and wrong; and though, by the strength of appetite and warmth of passion, men are often hurried into immoral practices, yet in the beginning, especially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is usually with reluctance and opposition of mind. What inward struggles precede! what bitter pangs attend their sinful excesses! what guilty blushes and uneasy fears! what frightful prospects and pale reviews! “Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown consumeth them.” To make a mock of sin, and to commit iniquity without remorse, is in some instances an attainment that requires length of time and much painful labor—more labor than is requisite to attain that salvation which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the Christian, and the chief of his happiness. The soul can no more be reconciled to acts of wickedness and injustice, than the body to excess, but by suffering many bitter pains and cruel attacks. The mouth of conscience may, indeed, be stopped for awhile by

the noise of company and stifled by the entertainments of sense; but this principle of conscience is so deep-rooted in human nature, and, at the same time, her voice is so clear and strong, that the sinner's arts will be unable to lull her into a lasting security. When the hour of calamity arrives, when sickness seizeth and death approaches the sinner, conscience then constrains him to listen to her accusation, and will not suffer the temples of his head to take any rest. "There is no peace to the wicked;" the foundations of peace are subverted; they are at utter enmity with their reason, with their conscience, and with their God.

Not so is the case of true religion. For, when religion pure and genuine forms the temper and governs the life, conscience applauds, and peace takes her residence in the breast. The soul is in its proper state. There is order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conscious of its own integrity, and secure of the divine approbation, the soul enjoys a calmness not to be described. But why do I call this happy frame mere calmness? the air may be calm, and the day overcast with thick mists and dark clouds. The pious and virtuous mind resembles a serene day enlightened and enlivened with the brightest rays of the sun. Though all without may be clouds and darkness, there is light in the heart of a devout man: "He is satisfied with favor," and "filled with peace and joy in believing." In the concluding scene, the awful moment of dissolution, all is peaceful and serene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay, with the well-grounded hope of ascending to happiness and glory.

Nor does the gospel enjoin any duty but what is fit

and reasonable. It calls upon all its professors to practice reverence, submission, love, and gratitude to God; justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our minds. And what has any one to object against this? From the least to the greatest commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reason can find fault with. "His law is perfect; his precepts are true and righteous altogether." Not even those excepted which require us "to love our enemies, to deny ourselves," and to "take up our cross." To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge it; to control a licentious appetite, than to indulge it; to suffer poverty, reproach, and even death itself, in the sacred cause of truth and integrity, is much wiser and better than by base compliances to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." Thus in a storm on sea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with pleasure abandons his slumber to secure his jewels. Piety and virtue are the wisest and most reasonable things in the world, vice and wickedness the most irrational and absurd.

The All-wise Author of our being hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such relations, that there is nothing vicious but what is injurious, nothing virtuous but what is advantageous to our present interest both with respect to body and mind. Meekness and humility, patience and universal charity, the fruits of grace, give a joy unknown to transgressors.

The divine virtues of truth and equity are the only bands of friendship, the only supports of society. Temperance and sobriety are the best preservatives of health and strength; but sin and debauchery impair the body,

consume the substance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to an immediate and ultimate death. Now, the chief excellency of all laws, and what will always render their burden pleasant and delightful is, that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious.

Besides, to render our duty easy, we have the example, as well as the commands, of the blessed Jesus. The masters of morality among the heathen gave excellent rules for the regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honesty or the courage to try their own arguments upon themselves. It was a strong presumption that the yoke of the Scribes and Pharisees was grievous, when they laid "heavy burdens upon men's shoulders," which they themselves refused to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great lawgiver, Jesus Christ the righteous. His behavior was in all respects conformable to his doctrine. His devotion toward God, how sublime and ardent! his benevolence toward men, how great and diffusive! He was in life an exact pattern of innocence; for he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." In the Son of God incarnate is exhibited the brightest, the fairest resemblance of the Father that earth or heaven ever beheld; an example peculiarly persuasive, calculated to inspire resolution, and to animate us to use our utmost endeavors to imitate the divine pattern, the example of "the author and finisher of our faith," of him "who loved us and gave himself for us." Our profession and character as Christians oblige us to make his example the model of our lives. Every motive of decency, gratitude, and interest constrains us to tread the path he trod before us.

We should also remember that our burden is easy;

because God, who "knoweth whereof we are made, who considereth that we are but dust," is ever ready to assist us. The heathen sages themselves had some notion of this assistance, though guided only by the glimmering lamp of reason. But what they looked upon as probable the gospel clearly and strongly asserts: We there hear the apostles exhorting, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We there hear the blessed Jesus himself arguing in this convincing manner: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

Though we may not be able to explain the mode of his operations, the Scriptures warrant us to assert, that, when men are renewed and prepared for heaven, it is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." How enlivening the thought! how encouraging the motive! We are not left to struggle alone with the difficulties which attend the practice of virtue, in the present imperfect state. To promote the happiness of his people, every thing is done by Christ that is requisite, his grace is all-sufficient, his Spirit is able to conduct us through this vale of tears, to never-fading bliss.

We should also remember, that the great doctrine of the gospel, concerning the propitious mercy of God to all penitents, through Christ Jesus, greatly contributes to the consolation of Christians. Let it be granted that the hope of pardon is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its first principles, yet, considering the doubts and suspicions which are apt to arise in a mind conscious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great and

inestimable favor to be relieved in this respect by a messenger from Omnipotence himself. This is our happiness. Here the gospel triumphs. With these assurances it abounds. Upon this head the declarations of our blessed Saviour and his apostles are so express and full, that every one who believes them, and knows himself to be a true penitent, must banish every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unspeakable, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Matt. xii. 31. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin." 1 John i. 7. What grace and favor is this! Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made easy. Our sins are pardonable, if repented of and forsaken.

Consider this, all ye who have never yet regarded religion, but pursued a course of vice and sensuality all your lives long. Though your conduct has been base, to the last degree, your case is not desperate. The God whom you have so highly offended commiserates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his most degenerate creatures, upon their faith and repentance, and "is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto sinners their trespasses. Let the wicked, therefore, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah lv. 7.

Another particular, which renders the Christian religion delightful, is its leading us to the perfect, eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied but that we may

draw from the light of nature strong presumptions of a future state. The present existence does not look like an entire scene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity. But, whatever solid foundation the doctrine of a future state may have in nature and reason, certain it is, through the habitual neglect of reflection, and the force of irregular passions, this doctrine was, before the coming of our blessed Saviour, very much disfigured, and, in a great measure, lost among the sons of men.*

In the heathen world, a future state of rewards and punishments was a matter of mere speculation and uncertainty—sometimes hoped for, sometimes doubted of, and sometimes absolutely denied.† The law of Moses,

* The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, in some form, enters into the religious creed of all civilized nations, ancient and modern. It has ever acted upon the hopes and fears of mankind; but in the rejection or absence of Divine Revelation, it has been so corrupted by fables, by priestcraft, poetry, or the false philosophy of metempsychosis, as to have lost almost all its salutary effect in the conscience and the life.

Modern *Spiritism* (miscalled Spiritualism) is but a revival of the ancient heathen Necromancy, and is corrupting the whole doctrine of the future life in the minds of its mystified and credulous disciples. That some men of high station and culture embrace it only proves how low pride can fall before the poor image of its own creation.

† Our author here refers not to the national creeds or popular beliefs of the heathen world in the time of Christ, but to the speculations of the philosophers of Greece and Rome for five hundred years before his Advent. While Conscience still asserted the judgment of God in a future life, Reason recoiled from the fabulous forms in which it was generally taught, and sought for substantial evidence of its nature and reality from every quarter, as by Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, and others; while many, like Epicurus and Polybius, doubted or denied the evidence altogether. Among the Jews this latter class was represented by the Sadducees.

though of divine origin, is chiefly enforced by promises of temporal blessings ; and even in the writings of the prophets a future immortality is very sparingly mentioned and obscurely represented ; but the doctrine of our Saviour “hath brought life and immortality to light.”*

In the gospel we have a distinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumstances, about which the decisions of reason were dark and confused. We have the testimony of the Author of our religion, who was raised from the dead, and who afterward, in the presence of his disciples, ascended into heaven. In the New Testament it is expressly declared that good men “when absent from the body are present with the Lord.” Here we are assured of the resurrection of the body in a glorious form, clothed with immortal vigor, suited to the active nature of the animating spirit, and assisting its most enlarged operations and incessant progress toward perfection. Here we are assured that “the righteous shall go into life everlasting ;” that they shall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, no vice disturb the will. In these regions of perfection, nothing but love shall possess the soul, nothing but gratitude employ the tongue ; there the righteous shall be united to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of

* This phrase (2 Tim. i. 10) does not mean that Christ was the first who taught the reality of a future life (which is not true in fact), but that he first threw a sure and steady light into the awful obscurities of the future world ; revealing the way of salvation to the soul and the resurrection of the body to incorruption and glory, of which he himself was the first great example 1 Cor. xv. 20, 50-58.

the first-born; there they shall see their exalted Redeemer at the right hand of Omnipotence, and sit down with him on his throne; there they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of the supreme Fountain of life and happiness, and, beholding his face, be changed into the same image from glory to glory. Here language, here imagination, fail me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel, to paint the happiness and blissful scene of the New Jerusalem, which human eyes cannot behold till this mortal body shall be purified from its corruption and dressed in the robes of immortality: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive, the joys which God hath prepared for those that love him."

What is the heaven of the heathen compared with the heaven of the Christian? The hope, the prospect of this is sufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progress, to sweeten all our labors, alleviate every grief, and silence every murmur.

But why, says the libertine, in the gayety of his heart, should there be any difficulties or restraint at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human breast are to be gratified. To deny or restrain them is ignominious bondage; but to give full scope to every desire and passion of the heart, without check or control, is true, manly freedom.

In opposition to this loose and careless way of reasoning, let it be considered that the liberty of a rational creature doth not consist in an entire exemption from all control, but in following the dictates of reason as the governing principle, and in keeping the various

passions in due subordination. To follow the regular motion of those affections which the wise Creator hath implanted within us, is our duty; but as our natural desires, in this state of trial, are often irregular, we are bound to restrain their excesses, and not to indulge them but in a strict subserviency to the integrity and peace of our minds and to the order and happiness of human society established in the world. Those who allow the supreme command to be usurped by sensual and brutal appetites may “promise themselves liberty,” but are truly and absolutely “the servants of corruption.” To be vicious is to be enslaved. We behold with pity those miserable objects that are chained in the galleys or confined in dark and loathsome dungeons; but much more abject and vile is the slavery of the sinner! No slavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind; no chains press so closely or gall so cruelly as the fetters of sin, which corrode the very substance of the soul and fret every faculty.

It must, indeed, be confessed that there are some profligates so hardened by custom as to be past all feeling, and who, because insensible of their bondage, boast of this insensibility as a mark of their native freedom, and of their happiness. Vain men! they might extol with equal propriety the peculiar happiness of an apoplexy, or the profound tranquillity of a lethargy.

Thus have we endeavored to place in a plain and conspicuous light some of the peculiar excellences of the Christian religion; and from hence many useful reflections will naturally arise in the mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of Jesus that hath

removed idolatry and superstition, and brought immortality to light when concealed under the vail of darkness almost impenetrable. This hath set the great truths of religion in a clear and conspicuous point of view, and proposed new and powerful motives to influence our minds and to determine our conduct. Nothing is enjoined to be believed but what is worthy of God, nothing to be practiced but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the gospel are rational and consistent; all its precepts are truly wise, just, and good. The gospel contains nothing grievous to an ingenuous mind; it debars us from nothing but doing harm to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures, and permits us to range anywhere but in the paths of danger and destruction. It only requires us to act up to its excellent commands, and to prefer to the vanishing pleasures of sin the smiles of a reconciled God, and "an eternal weight of glory." And is this a rigorous exaction, a heavy burden not to be endured? How can sinful mortals harbor so unworthy a thought?

Surely no man who is a real friend to the cause of virtue and to the interests of mankind can ever be an enemy to Christianity, if he truly understands it and seriously reflects on its wise and useful tendency. It conducts us to our journey's end by the plainest and securest path, where the "steps are not straitened, and where he that runneth stumbleth not."

Let us who live under this last and most gracious dispensation of God to mankind "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," and not suffer ourselves, by the slight cavils of unbelievers, to be "moved away from the hope of the

gospel." Let us demonstrate that we believe the superior excellency of the Christian dispensation, by conforming to its precepts. Let us show that we are Christians in deed and in truth ; not by endless disputes about trifles, and the transports of a blind zeal, but by abounding in those "fruits of righteousness which are, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

From what has been said, we may clearly perceive how groundless all those prejudices are which some conceive against religion, as if it were a peevish, morose scheme, burdensome to human nature and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life. Such sentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the spirits are brisk and lively and the passions warm and impetuous ; but it is wholly a mistake, and a mistake of the most dangerous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience ; no real peace but what results from the sense of the divine favor. This ennobles the mind, and can alone support it under all the various and unequal scenes of the present state of trial. This lays the sure foundation of an easy, comfortable life, of a serene and peaceful death, and of eternal joy and happiness hereafter ; whereas vice is ruinous to all our most valuable interests, spoils the native beauty and subverts the order of the soul, renders us the scorn of man, the rejected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happiness of the soul ; sin is the disease, the servitude, and destruction of it.

If this be not sufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee, worn out in the cause of iniquity, "his bones

full of the sins of his youth," that from his own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that "the way of transgressors is hard," and that, however sweet sin may be in the commission, it afterward "stings like a serpent and bites like an adder."

I am going, reader, to represent to you the last moments of a person of high birth and spirits, of great parts and strong passions, every way accomplished, but, unhappily, attached to those paths which lead to vice and destruction.

His unkind treatment was the cause of the death of a most amiable wife, and his monstrous extravagance, in effect, disinherited his only child. And surely the death-bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads! It has the most of hell that is visible upon earth; and he that hath seen it hath more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I see now (says the worthy divine from whom I shall borrow this relation),* for who can forget it? Are there in it no flames and furies? You are ignorant, then, of what a scared imagination can figure, what a guilty heart can feel! How dismal it is! The two great enemies of soul and body, Sickness and Sin, sink and confound his friends: silence and darkness are in the dismal scene. Sickness excludes the light of heaven, and sin its blessed hope. Oh, double darkness, more than Egyptian! actually to be felt!

The sad evening before the death of the noble youth whose last hours suggested these thoughts, I was with him. No one else was there but his physician, and an

* Dr. Young, author of the celebrated "Night Thoughts," in his "Centaur, not Fabulous."

intimate acquaintance, whom he loved and whom he had ruined.

At my coming he said : “ You and the physician are come too late : I have neither life nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead ! ”

“ Heaven,” I said, “ was merciful.”

“ Or I could not,” answered he, “ have been thus guilty. What has it not done to bless and to save me ? I have been too strong for Omnipotence. I plucked down ruin.”

I said, “ The blessed Redeemer—”

“ Hold, hold ! ” said he ; “ you wound me ! This is the rock on which I split ! I denied his name ! ”

Refusing to hear any thing from me or take any thing from his physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then he cried out, with vehemence, “ Oh, time ! time ! it is fit thou shouldst strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled forever ! A month ! Oh, for a single week ! I ask not for years—though an age were too little for the much I have to do.”

On my saying to him, we could not do too much, that heaven was a blessed place—

“ So much the worse,” replied he : “ ’tis lost ! ’tis lost ! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell ! ”

Soon after, I proposed prayer ; to which he answered : “ Pray, you that can. I never prayed. I cannot pray. My conscience is too much wounded. I have deserted my benevolent Maker, and my soul is enveloped in the deepest horrors.”

His friend, being much touched, even to tears, at this

(for who could forbear? I could not), he, with the most affectionate look said :

“Keep those tears for thyself: I have undone thee. Dost thou weep for me? That is cruel. What can pain me more?”

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

“No,” said he: “stay. You still may hope: therefore hear me. How madly have I talked! how madly hast thou listened and believed! But look on my present state as a full answer to thee and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason, full mighty to suffer; and that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality is, doubtless, immortal. And, as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict the pains I feel.”

I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary confessor, in his asserting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature, when he thus very passionately added:—“No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak. My much-injured friend: My soul, as my body, lies in ruins, in scattered fragments of broken thought. Remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future; worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flame. That is not an everlasting flame, that is not an unquenchable fire!”

How were we struck! yet, soon after, still more. With an eye of distraction, with a face of despair, he

cried out, "My principles have poisoned my friend; my extravagance beggared my boy; my unkindness murdered my wife! And is there yet another hell? O thou blasphemed yet indulgent Lord God! hell itself is a refuge if it hides me from thy frown."

Soon after, his understanding failed; his terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated or ever forgotten; and, before the sun (which I hope has seen few like him) arose, this gay, young, noble, ingenuous, accomplished, and most wretched mortal expired.

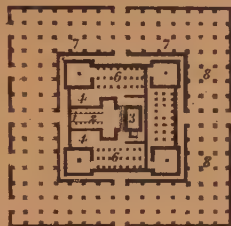
It must, indeed, be owned it sometimes happens that men who have lived very wicked lives, have gone out of the world as they have lived in it, defying conscience and deriding a future judgment as an idle fiction. But these instances are very rare, and only prove that there are monsters in the moral as well as the natural world.

It will perhaps be said that the sons of vice and riot have pleasure in sensual indulgences. Allowed; but it is altogether of the lower kind, empty, fleeting, and transient: "like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the mirth of the wicked." It makes a noise and a blaze for the present, but soon vanishes away into smoke and vapor.

On the other hand, the pleasure of religion is solid and lasting, and will attend us through all, even the last, stage of life. When we have passed the levity of youth, and have lost our relish for the gay entertainments of sense, when old age steals upon us, and stoops us toward the grave, this will cleave fast to us and give us relief. It will be so far from terminating at death, that it then commences perfect, and continually improves, with new additions.

CANAAN

Adapted to the
GOSPEL HISTORY
and exhibiting the
PRINCIPAL TRAVELS OF
JESUS CHRIST



PLAN of the TEMPLE.
Reference.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Holy of Holies | 5 Women's Court |
| 2 Holy Place | 6 Men's Court |
| 3 Alley of Burnt Offerings | 7 Court of the Gentiles |
| 4 Priests' Court | 8 Solomon's Porch |
| 9 Beautiful Gate | |



Reference to our Lord's Travels
from Nazareth to Jerusalem, when twelve
years of age, and his return.
From his entrance on his Ministry to
the Passover next, evening of the thirty
first year of his life A.D. 29
From the first to the second Passover
during his Ministry A.D. 30
From Jerusalem to Capernaum after
the celebration of the second Passover
at the celebration of the third or fourth Passover
during his Ministry but necessarily at Capernaum
for the Passover next evening of the thirty
first year of his life A.D. 29
It appears that our Lord did not visit Jerusalem
at the celebration of the third or fourth Passover
during his Ministry but necessarily at Capernaum
for the Passover next evening of the thirty
first year of his life A.D. 29
Our Saviour's journeyings from the fourth
Passover during his Ministry to the fifth, at which
he was Crucified in the thirty sixth year of his life A.D. 33



Clad in this immortal robe, we need not fear the awful summons of the king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the chambers of the dust. Our immortal part will wing its way to the arms of its Omnipotent Redeemer, and find rest in the heavenly mansions of the Almighty. And though our earthly part, this tabernacle of clay, returns to its original dust and is dissolved, our joy, our consolation, our confidence, is that “we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

THE

LIVES OF THE APOSTLES.

S T. P E T E R.

ST. PETER was born at Bethsaida, on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, called also the sea of Galilee, from its being situated in that country, and the lake of Tiberias, from that city being built on its banks. His father's name was Jonah. He was at least ten years older than his Master; the circumstances of his being married, and in a settled course of life, when he first became a follower of the great Messiah, and that authority and respect the gravity of his person procured him among the rest of the apostles, sufficiently declare this conjecture to be just.

As he was a descendant of Abraham, he was circumcised according to the rites of the Mosaic law, and called by his parents Simon or Simeon, a name common at that time among the Jews. But after his becoming a disciple of the blessed Jesus, the additional title of Cephas was conferred upon him by his Master, to denote the firmness of his faith; the word Cephas, in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, signifying a stone or rock; and thence he is called, in

Greek, *Petros*, and by us Peter, which implies the same thing.

Simon Peter, in his youth, was brought up at Bethsaida, to the trade of fishing on the lake, famous for different kinds of fish, which excelled all others in the fineness of their taste. He afterward removed to Capernaum, where he settled; for we find he had a house there when our Saviour began his public ministry, and there he paid tribute.

The business of Peter was both mean and toilsome; it exposed him to all the injuries of the weather, the tempestuousness of the sea, and the darkness and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himself and family. But meanness of worldly degree is no obstacle to the favor of God: nay, if we review the state of Christianity, from its rise to the present period, we shall find that its friends and votaries consist rather of persons of humble and lowly stations of life, than of the great, the dignified, and the opulent.

And herein are manifested the wise and admirable methods used by Divine Providence, in making choice of such mean and unlikely instruments in planting and propagating the Christian religion in the world. Men who were destitute of the advantages of education, and brought up to the meanest employments, were chosen to confound the wise, and overturn the learning of the great.

We know, indeed, that his brother Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist and was led by him to the personal knowledge of Christ.

It is not enough to be happy alone: grace is a communicative principle, that, like the circles in the water,

delights to multiply itself, and to diffuse its influences all around, especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. I have, said Andrew, with rapture to his brother, found that eminent person so long and signally foretold by the prophets, and whom all the devout and pious among the sons of Jacob so earnestly expected.

Simon, who was one of those who waited for the redemption of Israel, ravished with the joyful news, and impatient of delay, presently followed his brother; and on his arrival our blessed Saviour immediately gave him a proof of his divinity; saluting him at first sight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name and kindred, and what title should soon be conferred upon him.

Peter was undoubtedly one of the disciples who were with Jesus at the marriage at Cana in Galilee, and afterward went with him into Judea, where he tarried the first year of his ministry, and baptized. But he did not become conspicuous until they returned to Galilee at the beginning of the next year.

In order to avoid the prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer, who might have commanded, was pleased to entreat Peter, who had now returned to his boat, to thrust off a little from the land, that he might instruct the people.

Peter gladly complied with the request of his Master, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on the shore. As soon as he had ended his discourse he ordered Simon to row farther from the shore, and cast his net into the sea. To which Simon answered, that they had labored the preceding night, and had taken nothing; and, if they could not then succeed, there

were little hopes of it now, as the day was far less proper for fishing than the night. But as his Master was pleased to command, he would obey; and accordingly he let down his net, when, to the astonishment both of him and of his companions, so great a multitude of fishes were enclosed, that they were obliged to call their partners to their assistance. Amazed at this miraculous draught of fishes, Simon Peter, in an ecstasy of admiration, blended with awe and humility, fell prostrate at his Master's feet, acknowledging himself a vile and sinful man, and thinking himself unworthy of being admitted into the presence of a person so immediately sent from God. But the compassionate Son of the Most High kindly removed his fears; telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith, and indicate to him that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him, that of saving the souls of the children of men.

From this time Peter and his companions became the inseparable and constant disciples of the great Messiah, living under the rules of his discipline and institutions.

The blessed Jesus, having entered upon his important mission, thought proper to select some peculiar persons from among his followers to be constant witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, and who, after his departure, might be entrusted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world, for which he himself left the mansions of heaven and put on the vail of mortality. All the evangelists, in their enumeration of the apostles, constantly place St. Peter first. But we must not on that account suppose that Peter was invested with any personal prerogatives above his brethren. None

of them ever intimated any such thing; and St. Paul says expressly that he was not inferior to the very chiefest apostle.*

These he afterward invested with the power of working miracles, and sent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great work which he himself had so happily begun.

Soon after his election, Peter, with James and John, was permitted by the Saviour to be present at the raising to life of Jairus's daughter, a privilege enjoyed only by these three apostles, and the parents of the child.

We have no farther account of St. Peter in particular, till the night after our Saviour's miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness. Jesus had ordered his disciples to take ship, and pass over to the other side, while he sent the multitude away. But a violent storm arising, they were in great danger of their lives, when their Master came unto them, walking on the surface of the boisterous billows with the same ease as if it had been dry ground.

Peter, who was always remarkable for bold resolutions, desired his Master to give him leave to come to him on the water; and on obtaining permission, he left the ship, and walked on the sea to meet his Saviour. But when he heard the deep roar around him, and the waves increase, he began to be afraid; and as his faith declined, his body sunk in the water; so that in the greatest agony he called for assistance to him who was able to

* Peter's seniority of age goes far of itself to explain this. In natural gifts of speaking, also, he seems specially qualified to be a leader; while his characteristics—impulsive in feeling, decisive in judgment, demonstrative in utterance, and daring in action—instinctively put him in the front rank of the twelve.

save. Nor was his cry in vain ; the compassionate Redeemer of mankind stretched out his hand, and again placed him on the surface of the water, with this gentle reproof, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

The very next day, in the synagogue of Capernaum, the Saviour’s discourse gave such offence, that many of his professed disciples “went back and walked no more with him.” Jesus said to the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Peter replied in behalf of them all, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This noble and explicit confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, was not long after repeated on a new occasion at Cesarea, Philippi.

The inhabitants of Judea, who beheld with astonishment the miracles wrought by the blessed Jesus, had formed many conjectures concerning him. Our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this : but being willing to hear what account his disciples would give of the various opinions of the people, asked them what the world said concerning him? To which they replied, that some took him for John the Baptist, risen from the dead ; some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. He asked them what they themselves thought of him : to which Peter, in the name of the rest, answered, “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,” anointed and set apart by the Most High, to be the great King, Priest, and Prophet of Israel.

This full and comprehensive declaration of Peter satisfied the inquiry of our blessed Saviour, who answered : “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah ; for flesh and blood

hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

The disciples then had no idea that their Master was to suffer death for the sins of the world; on the contrary, they considered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, "that Christ abideth forever:" so that when the blessed Jesus told them of the sufferings he must undergo at Jerusalem, what affronts and indignities he must suffer, and be at last put to death with all the acts of torture and disgrace, by a sentence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Master's suffering even the least punishment, much less those cruelties he had mentioned, and at last death itself, interrupted him very unseasonably, and said: "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." He considered these sufferings as inconsistent with the character of the great Messiah, whom he expected would restore the splendor of the throne of David his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience. But our blessed Saviour, who came down from heaven to give his life a ransom for the sins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own ease and safety, returned this sharp reproof: "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me." Thy pernicious counsels in seeking to oppose the design for which I purposely left the courts of heaven, are offensive; and thou "savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Some time after, the great Redeemer of the souls of men, being to receive a specimen of his future glorification, took with him three of his most intimate apostles.

Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high mountain, and while they were employed in earnest addresses to the Almighty, he was transfigured before them, an evident and sensible representation of that state, when the just shall "walk in white robes, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." During this heavenly scene, the great prophets Moses and Elias appeared in all the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, familiarly conversing with him, and discoursing of the death and sufferings he was shortly to undergo, and his ascension to the heavenly regions of bliss and happiness.

After this heavenly scene our blessed Lord travelled through Galilee, and at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter and asked him whether his Master was not obliged to pay tribute? When our blessed Saviour was informed of this demand, rather than give offence, he wrought a miracle to pay it.

The blessed Jesus proceeded to Bethany, from whence he sent Peter and John, to make preparations for his celebrating the passover.

Every thing being ready, our blessed Saviour and his apostles entered the house, and sat down to the table. But their great Master, who often taught them by example as well as precept, arose from his seat, laid aside his upper garment, took the towel, and pouring water into a basin, began to wash his disciples' feet, to teach them humility and charity, by his own example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Master to perform so mean and condescending an office. What! the Son of God stoop to wash the feet of a sinful mortal! A thought which shocked the apostle, who strenuously

declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But the blessed Jesus told him that if he washed him not, he could have no part with him; intimating, that this action was symbolical, and signified the remission of sins, and the purifying virtue of the Spirit of the Most High, to be poured upon all true Christians. This answer sufficiently removed the scruples of Peter, who cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Wash me in every part, rather than let me lose my portion in thee.

Our great Redeemer now began the institution of his Supper, that great and solemn institution, which he resolved to leave behind him, to be constantly celebrated in his church, as a standing monument of his love in dying for mankind; telling them at the same time that he himself was now going to leave them, and that "whither he went, they could not come." Peter, not well understanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going. To which our great Redeemer replied, that he was going to that place whither he could not now, but should hereafter follow him: intimating the martyrdom he was to suffer for his Master's religion. Peter answered, that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident presumption was not at all agreeable to the blessed Jesus, who told him he had promised great things, but would be so far from performing them, that before "the cock crew" he would deny him thrice.

Supper being now ended, Jesus again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to suffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that "though all men should be offended because of him, yet he himself

would never be offended." How far will an indiscreet zeal and affection transport even a good man into vanity and presumption ! Peter questions the fidelity of others, but never doubts his own : though his Lord had just before reproved him for his self-sufficiency.

They now repaired to the garden of Gethsemane ; and leaving the rest of the apostles near the entrance, our blessed Saviour, taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the most solitary part of the garden, to enter on the preparatory scene of the great tragedy that was now approaching.

A band of soldiers, from the chief priests and elders, preceded by the traitor Judas, to conduct and direct them, rushed into the garden, and seized the great High-Priest of our profession. Peter, whose ungovernable zeal would admit of no restraint, drew his sword, and, without the least order from his Master, struck at one of the persons who seemed to be remarkably busy in binding Jesus, and cut off his right ear. This zeal was very offensive to his Master, who rebuked Peter, and entreated the patience of the soldiers, while he miraculously healed the wound.

Now the fidelity of the apostles, which they had urged with so much confidence, was put to the trial. But, alas ! instead of assisting or comforting their great Master, they forsook him and fled.

Peter, who had followed the other disciples in their flight, recovered his spirits, and being encouraged by his companion, St. John, returned to seek his Master. Seeing them leading him to the high-priest's hall, he followed at a distance to know the event : but on his coming to the door, was refused admittance, till one of

the disciples who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed upon the servant who kept the door, to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the fire, burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and servants were standing; where being observed by the maid-servant who let him in, she charged him with being one of Christ's disciples: but Peter publicly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and presently withdrew into the porch, where another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, which Peter denied, and, the better to gain belief, ratified it with an oath.

About an hour after, a servant of the high-priest, akin to him whose ear Peter had cut off, charged him with being a disciple of Christ, and that he himself had seen him in the garden with him: adding that his very speech sufficiently proved that he was a Galilean. Peter, however, still denied the fact; and, to his sin, ratified it not only by an oath, but a solemn curse and execration, that "he was not the person," and that "he knew not the man." But no sooner had he uttered this denial (which was the third time) than the "cock crew;" at which his Master turned about, and earnestly looked upon him in a manner that pierced him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance what his Saviour had more than once foretold, namely, that he would basely and shamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his sorrow: he flew from the palace of the high-priest, and "wept bitterly," passionately bewailing his folly, and the aggravations of his sin.

We have in St. Peter an example for our instruction. The opinion of his own strength proved his ruin. So

dangerous and fatal is it to lean on our own understandings; to be wise, good, and safe, in our own conceit; when all our sufficiency, all our safety, is of God.

It is certain, from various circumstances, that Peter, after the crucifixion of his Lord and Master, stayed at Jerusalem, or at least in the neighborhood; for when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the door, and the body not to be found, Peter and John set out immediately toward the garden. John, who was the younger, arrived at the sepulchre first, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of fear or reverence to our Saviour. Peter came soon after, and resolutely went into the sepulchre, where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, and the napkin that was about his head wrapped together in another, a sufficient indication that the body was not stolen away; for had that been the case, so much care and order would not have been observed in disposing of the linen clothes.

But Peter did not wait long in suspense, with regard to his great Lord and Master; for the same day Jesus appeared to him, to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of, in denying him, was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour oil into the wounded conscience.

Soon after the apostles prepared to obey the command of their great Master, of retiring into Galilee; and we find Peter, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, fishing in the lake.

One morning early, having spent the whole night to no purpose, they saw on the shore a grave person, who called to them, and asked them if they had any meat?

To which they answered, No. Cast then, replied he, the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They followed his directions, and caught a prodigious number of large fish. Astonished at such remarkable success, the disciples looked upon one another for some time, till St. John told Peter that the person on the shore was, doubtless, their great Lord and Master.

Peter threw himself into the sea, and swam to shore; his impatience to be with his dear Lord and Master not suffering him to stay the few minutes necessary to bring the ship to land.

When their repast was ended, our blessed Saviour addressed himself particularly to Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence in the care of souls: and because he knew that nothing but a sincere love to himself could support him under the trouble and dangers of so laborious and difficult an employment, he inquired of him, whether he loved him more than the rest of the apostles: mildly reproving him for his over-confident resolution. Peter, whom fatal experience had taught humility, modestly answered, that none knew so well as Jesus himself the integrity of his affections. Thou knowest the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest that I love thee. The question was three several times repeated by our blessed Saviour, and as oftentimes answered by the apostle; it being but just, that he, who by a threefold denial had given so much reason to question his affection, should now by a threefold confession, give more than common assurance of his sincere love to his Master; and to each of these confessions our great Redeemer added this signal trial of his affection, "Feed my sheep." Instruct and

teach them with the utmost care, and the utmost tenderness.

The blessed Jesus having thus engaged Peter to a cheerful compliance with the dangers that might attend the discharge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him, telling him, that when he was young, he girt himself, lived at his pleasure, and went wherever his fancy directed him; but when he should reach the term of old age, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no desire to go, intimating, as the evangelist tells us, “by what death he should glorify God.”

Not long after, our blessed Saviour appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem, to take his last farewell of those who had attended him during his public ministry. He led them out as far as Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, where he briefly told them that they were the persons he had chosen to be the witnesses, both of his death and resurrection; a testimony which they should publish in every part of the world. In order to which, he would, after his ascension into heaven, pour out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary manner, that they might be the better enabled to struggle with that violent rage and fury, with which the doctrine of the gospel would be opposed by men and devils. Adding that, in the meantime, they should return to Jerusalem, and there wait till those miraculous powers were given them from on high.

The apostles, who beheld their Master visibly ascend into heaven, were filled with a greater sense of his glory than they had ever been while he conversed with them

familiarly on the earth. And after solemn adoration to him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, there to wait for the accomplishment of their great Master's promise. How sudden and complete a change was now wrought in their minds! They who were lately overwhelmed with sorrow, at the very mention of their Lord's departure from them, beheld him now with joy and triumph; they were fully satisfied of his glorious advancement to the right hand of Omnipotence, and of that peculiar care and providence which they were sure he would exercise over them, in pursuance of those great trusts he had committed to their care.

The apostles, though deprived of the personal presence of their dear Lord and Master, were indefatigable in fulfilling the commission they had received from him. The first object that engaged their attention, after their return to Jerusalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their number lately made by the unhappy fall and apostacy of Judas. In order to this, they called together the church, and entered into "an upper room," when Peter, as president of the assembly, proposed to them the choice of a new apostle.

After filling up the vacancy in the apostolic number, they spent their time in prayer and meditation, till the feast of Pentecost; when the promise of their great Master in sending the Holy Ghost was fulfilled. The Christian assembly were met as usual to perform the public services of their worship, when suddenly a sound, like that of a mighty wind, rushed in upon them; representing the powerful efficacy of that divine Spirit which was now to be communicated to them. After which there appeared gentle flames of fire, which, in the shape

of cloven tongues, descended and sat upon the head of each of them, to denote that their enjoyment of this gift should be constant and perpetual; and not like the prophets of old, who were inspired only at some particular times and seasons. Upon this they were all immediately filled with the Holy Ghost, which, in an instant, enabled them to speak fluently several languages they had never learned, and probably never heard.

The report of so sudden and strange an event was soon spread through every part of Jerusalem, which at that time was full of Jewish proselytes, "devout men of every nation under heaven, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Lybia and Cyrene," from Rome, from Crete, and from Arabia. These no sooner heard of this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit, than they flocked in prodigious numbers to the Christian assembly, where they were amazed to hear these Galileans speaking to them in their own native languages, so various and so very different from one another. Nor were their discourses filled with idle stories, or the follies of a luxuriant fancy. No, they expatiated on the great and admirable works of Omnipotence, and the mysteries of the gospel, which human apprehension could never discover.

This surprising transaction had different effects on the minds of the people; some attributing it to the effect of a miracle, and others, mockingly, to the power and strength of "new wine." Upon which the apostles all stood up, and Peter, in the name of the rest, undertook to confute this injurious calumny.

The effect of his discourse was equally wonderful and surprising; for great numbers of those who before ridiculed the religion of Jesus now acknowledged him for their Saviour, and flew to him for refuge from the impending storm. And St. Luke tells us, that there were that day added to the church no less than three thousand souls, who were all baptized and received into the flock of the great Shepherd of Israel, the bishop of our souls. A quick and plentiful harvest indeed! "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Soon after this wonderful conversion, Peter and John, going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, one of the solemn hours of prayer, saw a poor impotent cripple, near forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth, lying at the "beautiful gate of the temple," and asking alms of those who entered the sacred edifice. This miserable object moved their compassion; and Peter, beholding him with attention, said: The riches of this world, the silver and gold, so highly coveted by the sons of men, are not in my power to bestow; but I possess the gift of restoring life and health, in the name of Jesus Christ, and am ready to assist thee. And, thus saying, he healed him.

Peter, seeing the multitude gathering around them, took the opportunity of speaking to them in the following manner: "Men and brethren, this remarkable cure should not excite your admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own power. It was wrought in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, our crucified Master—by the power of that very Christ, that holy and just person, whom you yourselves denied, and delivered to Pilate; nay, and preferred a murderer before him, when the

governor was desirous of letting him go. But though you have put him to death, yet we are witnesses that He hath raised him again from the dead, and that he is ascended into heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous day of general restitution."

While Peter was speaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was, in all probability, doing the same in the other. And the success plainly indicated how powerful the preaching of the apostles was—five thousand persons embracing the doctrines of the gospel, and acknowledging the crucified Jesus for their Lord and Saviour.

Such amazing success could not fail of exciting the attention and envy of the rulers of Israel. Upon their information, the captain of the temple seized on the apostles and cast them into prison.

The next day they were carried before the Jewish Sanhedrim; and being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly answered: "Be it known unto you, and to all, that this miracle was wrought wholly in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye yourselves have crucified and slain, and whom the Almighty hath raised again from the dead. This is the stone which you builders refused, and which is become the head of the corner. Nor is there any other way by which you, or any of the sons of men can be saved, but by this crucified Saviour."

The boldness of the apostle was admired by all, even by the court of the Sanhedrin. And it should be remembered, that these very judges were the persons who had so lately condemned the blessed Jesus himself, and had no other way of coloring their proceedings than by a second

act of cruelty; that the apostles did not charge them with the crime of crucifying the Son of God in secret, but in the open court of Judicature, and in the hearing of all the people.

The labors of the apostles were crowned with abundant success; and it seems that such was the aversion of the inveterate Jews to those who became converts to the faith of Christ, that they were deprived of business in their respective callings. For we find that the professors of the religion of the holy Jesus sold their effects, and brought the money to the apostles, that they might deposit it in one common treasury, and from thence supply the several exigencies of the church.

But hypocrisy was not unknown among the professors of religion, even in these primitive times. Ananias, and his wife Sapphira, being detected by Peter, fell dead at the apostle's feet, a divine warning to others.

But such instances of severity were very extraordinary: the power of the apostles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence toward the sons and daughters of affliction. They cured all kinds of diseases, and cast out devils; so that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, that the shadow at least of Peter, as he passed by, might cover some of them; well knowing a single touch or word, from either of the apostles, was sufficient to remove the most inveterate diseases.

The Christian doctrine had been propagated hitherto without much violence or opposition, in Jerusalem, but now a storm commenced with the death of the proto-martyr Stephen, nor did it end but with the dispersion of the disciples, by which means the glad tidings which

had till now been confined to Judea, was preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says, "Out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise.

The storm, though violent, being at length blown over, the church enjoyed a time of calmness and security; during which, St. Peter went to visit the churches lately planted in those parts, by the disciples whom the persecution had dispersed. And at his arrival at Lydda,* he miraculously healed Æneas, who had been afflicted with the palsy, and confined to his bed eight years. Nor was the success of his miracle confined to Æneas and his family; the fame of it was blazed through all the neighboring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa,† a seaport town about six miles from Lydda, and the brethren immediately sent for Peter, on the following melancholy occasion: Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety and extensive charity, was lately dead.

At Peter's arrival he found her dressed for funeral

* Lydda was a village, or rather city, according to Josephus, situated in the plain of Sharon, on the ancient road from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, some miles northeast of Ramleh.

† Joppa (the modern Jaffa) was the principal seaport of Judea until the time of Herod the Great; who built a magnificent harbor and city at Strato's Tower, and named it Cæsarea, in honor of Augustus Cæsar. Joppa is a city of great importance, often mentioned in the New Testament, and is built on a promontory jutting out into the Mediterranean sea. Its situation is quite picturesque. It is now, as of old, the port of Jerusalem, thirty-five miles to the northwest, and is about to be connected with that city by a railroad.

solemnity, and surrounded by mournful widows, who showed the coats and garments wherewith she had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality. But Peter put them all out, and kneeling down, prayed with the utmost fervency; then turning to the body, he commanded her to arise, and taking her by the hand, presented her in perfect health to her friends and others, who were assembled to pay their last duties to so good a woman. This miracle confirmed those who had newly embraced the doctrine of Jesus, and converted many more to the faith. After which he stayed a considerable time at Joppa, lodging in the house of one Simon, a tanner.

It was here that Peter had the remarkable vision and the divine message, which summoned him to Cæsarea,* to “open the door of faith to the Gentiles,” in the house of Cornelius the Roman centurion. Acts x. 1, etc.

Peter, after having finished his visitation to the new planted churches, returned to Jerusalem, and was indefatigable in instructing the converts in the religion of Jesus, and preaching the glad tidings of salvation to the descendants of Jacob. But he did not long continue in this pleasing course. Herod Agrippa,† in order to ingra-

* Cæsarea, the civil capital of Judea at this time, was about thirty miles north of Joppa, on the Mediterranean. Its inhabitants were chiefly Greeks. It was the most splendid and populous city in Palestine, and the residence of the Roman governor. See the preceding note. Now it is a mass of ruins, infested by serpents and beasts of prey.

† Herod Agrippa I. was the grandson of Herod the Great, and had but recently been invested by Claudius Cæsar with the sovereignty of Judea, in addition to Galilee, Samaria, and Perea, A. D. 43. He lived but a short time after this. In the midst of his pomp at Cæsarea, the angel of the Lord smote him, and the first royal persecutor of the Church of Christ “was eaten of worms and died.” A. D. 44.

tiate himself into the favor of the Jews, put the apostle James to death, and finding the action was highly acceptable to that stiff-necked people, he resolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly cast him into prison. But the churches were incessant in their prayers to God for his safety, and his great and beloved Master sent a messenger from above, and released him from prison. He therefore repaired to the house of Mary, where the church was assembled, and offering up their prayers to the throne of grace for his safety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the door; which they at first considered as the effect of fancy. But, on opening the door they were convinced of their mistake, finding that it was really Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered; and desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, retired to another place.

In the morning the officers came from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution. But when they came to the prison, the keepers informed them that the apostle had made his escape; which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those who were entrusted with the care of the prisoner to be put to death.

As we have now related the principal transactions of this apostle, that are founded on Scripture authority, we shall have recourse to ancient historians for the residue of his life.

St. Peter had preached the gospel in various parts of the world, enlarging the kingdom of his great Master,

and spreading the glad tidings of salvation among the inhabitants of various countries ; and among the rest those of Babylon in the East, where he wrote his first epistle, and in the West, to Rome, then the mistress of the world.

Toward the latter end of the reign of Nero, when Peter was in Rome, orders were given by that emperor for apprehending him, together with his companion Paul.

Ambrose tells us, that when the people perceived the danger to which St. Peter was now exposed, they prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to some secure retreat, that his life might be preserved for the benefit of the church. Peter, with great reluctance, yielded to their entreaties, and made his escape by night ; but as he passed the gate, he was met by a person in the form of his great and beloved Master, and on his asking him whither he was going, answered, “ To Rome, to be crucified a second time :” which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice, returned again into the city, and was soon after apprehended, and cast, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertime prison. Here they were confined eight or nine months ; but spent their time in the exercise of religion, especially in preaching to the prisoners, and those who resorted to them. And during this confinement, it is generally thought, St. Peter wrote the second epistle to the dispersed Jews, wherein he endeavors to confirm them in the belief and practice of Christianity, and to fortify them against those poisonous and pernicious principles and actions which even then began to break in upon the Christian church.

Nero at last returning from Achaia, entered Rome in

triumph; and soon after his arrival, resolved that the apostles should fall as victims and sacrifices to his cruelties and revenge. Accordingly they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome: and St. Peter having taken his farewell of the brethren, especially of St. Paul, was taken from the prison and led to the top of the Vatican mount, near the Tiber, where he was sentenced to surrender up his life on the cross.

At his coming to the place of execution, he begged the favor of the officers, that he might not be crucified in the common manner, but with his head downward; affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture in which his Lord had suffered before him. This request was accordingly complied with; and the great apostle St. Peter surrendered up his soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Master, who came down from heaven to ransom mankind from destruction, and open for them the gates of the heavenly Canaan.

His body, being taken down from the cross, is said to have been embalmed by Mercellimus, the presbyter, after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian way, two miles from Rome.

ST. PAUL.

THIS great apostle of the Gentiles was a descendant from the ancient stock of Abraham. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob. Tarsus, the place of his nativity, was the metropolis of Cilicia,

and situated about three hundred miles distant from Jerusalem; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman municipium, or free corporation, invested with the privileges of Rome by the two first emperors, as a reward for the citizens' firm adherence to the Cæsars in the rebellion of Crassus. St. Paul was therefore born a Roman citizen, and he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

It was common for the wealthy Jews of Tarsus to send their children into other cities for learning and improvement; especially to Jerusalem, where they were so numerous, that they had a synagogue of their own, called the synagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our apostle was also sent, and brought up at the school of that eminent rabbi, Gamaliel, in the most exact knowledge of the law of Moses. Nor did he fail to profit by the instructions of that great master; for he so diligently conformed himself to the precepts, that, without boasting, he asserts of himself, that touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless, and defied even his enemies to allege any thing to the contrary, even in his youth. He joined himself to the sect of the Pharisees, the most strict order of the Jewish religion, but, at the same time, the proudest, and the greatest enemies to Christ and his holy religion.

With regard to his double capacity, of Jewish extraction and Roman freedom, he had two names, Saul and Paul; the former Hebrew, and the latter Latin. We must also consider his trade of tent-making as a part of his education; it being a constant practice of the Jews to bring up their children to some honest calling, that,

in case of necessity, they might provide for themselves by the labor of their own hands.

Saul having obtained a thorough knowledge of the sciences cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, became a great champion of the law of Moses, and the tradition of the elders, which he considered as zeal for God.

This rendered him impatient of all opposition to the doctrines and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blasphemer and persecutor of the Christians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and destroyers of the Jewish economy.

The first action we find him engaged in, was the disputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr Stephen, with regard to the Messiah. The Christian was too hard for them in the dispute: but they were too powerful for him in their civil interests: for being enraged at his convincing arguments, they carried him before the high-priest, who by false accusations condemned him to death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel action, it is impossible to say; all we know is, that he "kept the raiment of them that slew him."

The storm of persecution against the church being thus begun, it increased prodigiously, and the poor Christians of Jerusalem were miserably harassed and dispersed. In this persecution our apostle was a principal agent, searching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted saints, beating some in the synagogue, inflicting other cruelties, confining some in prison, and procuring others to be put to death.

But it was the will of Providence he should be employed in a work of a very different nature. For as he

was travelling to Damascus,* to execute the commission of the Jewish Sanhedrim, a refulgent light, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, darted upon him; at which both he and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, and immediately fell prostrate on the ground. While they lay in this state, a voice was heard, in the Hebrew language, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To which Saul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" And was immediately answered, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." As if the blessed Jesus had said, "All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me will prove abortive; and, like kicking against the spikes, wound and torment thyself."

Saul, convinced of his folly in having acted against Jesus, whom he was now assured to be the true Mes-

* Damascus, the capital of lower Syria, is perhaps the oldest city in the world (Gen. xiv. 15), and most beautifully situated, one hundred and forty miles northeast of Jerusalem, in a fertile plain, southeast of the eastern range of Lebanon. Its situation has always commanded an immense trade, and even now it contains one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. It is watered by two perennial streams, the Barada on the north, and the Awig on the south—the Abana and Pharpar, so dear to Naaman; so that, for a circuit of fifty miles around, the country blooms like the garden of Eden.

Damascus has passed through many political changes. It was governed by its own kings till the time of David, who conquered it and made it a part of his great empire. It was inherited by Solomon, but lost by him. It was recovered by Jeroboam II. to Israel. It fell successively into the hands of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans; but was for a short time taken from the Romans by Aretas, king of Arabia, and held by him during Paul's second visit. The Jews were very numerous in Damascus, and Christianity early found a footing among them, about A. D. 35. To crush it was the purpose of Saul of Tarsus at this time: to defend, confirm, and diffuse it by his conversion was the will of God.

siah, asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" On which the blessed Jesus replied, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

In the meantime our blessed Saviour appeared in a vision to Ananias, a very devout and religious man, highly esteemed by all the inhabitants of Damascus. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street, which is called Straight,* and inquire in the house of Judas, for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for behold he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight."

Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the commands of the Most High, startled at the name, having heard of the bloody practices of Saul at Jerusalem, and what commission he was now come to execute in Damascus. He, therefore, suspected that his conversion was nothing more than a snare artfully laid by him against the Christians. But our blessed Saviour soon removed his apprehensions, by telling him that his suspicions were entirely destitute of foundation; and that he had now taken him, as a chosen vessel, to preach the gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greatest monarchs of the earth. At the same time he acquainted him with the great persecutions Paul should undergo for the sake of the gospel: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

This quieted the fears of Ananias, who immediately repaired to the house of Judas, and, laying his hands

* This street, which runs through the city from east to west in a straight line, is still called by the same name.

upon Saul, addressed him in words to this effect:—
“That Jesus,” said he, “who appeared to thee in the way, hath sent me to restore thy sight, and by the infusion of his Spirit to give thee the knowledge of those truths which thou hast blindly and ignorantly persecuted.”

This speech was no sooner pronounced, than there fell from his eyes thick films, resembling scales, and he received his sight; and, after baptism, conversed with the Christians at Damascus. He also, to their great astonishment, preached the gospel, boldly asserting, “that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God;” and proving it to the Jews with such demonstrative evidence, that they were confounded, and finding it impossible to answer him, attempted to kill him.

The miraculous convert, at the instance of the divine command, retired into Arabia, where he received a full revelation of all the mysteries of Christianity; for he himself declares that he conferred not with flesh and blood. Having preached in several parts of that country some time, he returned again to Damascus, applying himself, with the utmost assiduity, to the great work of the ministry, frequenting the synagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made against Jesus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles.

This irritated the Jews to the highest degree; and at length they found means to prevail on the governor of Damascus* to have him put to death.

In this distress, his Christian friends, finding it impossible for him to pass through either of the gates of the city, let him down from one of their houses, through a

* Under Aretas, king of Arabia, a friend of the Jews.

window, in a basket, over the wall, by which means the cruel designs of his enemies were rendered abortive.

Having thus escaped from his malicious persecutors, he repaired to Jerusalem, and, on his arrival, addressed himself to the church. But they, knowing well the former temper and principles of this great persecutor, shunned his company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter and to James, informing them of his miraculous conversion, and that he had preached the gospel with the greatest boldness in the synagogues of Damascus; upon which they gladly received him, and familiarly entertained him fifteen days.

During this interval, he was remarkably assiduous in preaching the gospel of the Son of God, and confuting the Hellenist Jews* with the greatest courage and resolution. But snares were laid for him, as malice can as easily cease to be, as to remain inactive. Being warned by God, in a vision, that his testimony would not be received at Jerusalem, he thought proper to depart, and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by his brethren to Cæsarea, he set sail for Tarsus, his native city; from whence he was soon after brought, by Barnabas, to Antioch, in Syria,† to

* The Hellenist Jews were those who habitually spoke the Greek language. They are called Grecians in Acts vi. 1, in distinction from the Hebrews, *i. e.*, those who used only the Aramaean or later Hebrew. The Hellenists had many synagogues in Jerusalem, among whom Stephen had labored, and Paul had then resisted him, being himself a Hellenist Jew. He was now most anxious to convince them of the truth he had once opposed.

† Antioch, the metropolis of Syria under the Romans, was one of the most populous and splendid cities of the empire. It ranked next to Rome and Alexandria. It was founded by the Syro-Grecian kings, on the southern bank of the Orontes, eighteen miles from its mouth, and con-

assist him in propagating Christianity in that city. In this employment he spent one whole year, and had the satisfaction of seeing the gospel flourish in a very remarkable manner.

It was in Antioch that the disciples first acquired the name of *Christians*, before which they were styled Nazarenes; but this appellation soon prevailed all over the world; and the latter was in a few ages almost entirely forgotten. It was in this city, also, the first mission to the heathen world was established by the Holy Ghost, and Barnabas and Paul sent out as the first missionaries.

The first place visited by Barnabas and Paul was Seleucia,* where they did not continue long, but sailed for Cyprus;† and at Salamis, a great city in that island,

tained at this time perhaps half a million inhabitants, chiefly Greeks; abounding in wealth, intellectual culture, and refinement, combined with every form of heathen licentiousness and corruption. Yet here grew up, under the labors of Barnabas, Paul, and others, the most vigorous and generous church of primitive times. By the Roman coast road, it was over four hundred miles north of Jerusalem.

* Seleucia, at the mouth of the river Orontes, was the seaport of Antioch, being eighteen miles distant. The ruins of its harbor now remain to attest its ancient greatness. It was on the west side of the river, and fronted the lofty heights of Mount Casius.

† Cyprus was a large and beautiful island lying in the Mediterranean sea, about fifty miles south of the Cilician coast. In a clear sky the highlands of Cyprus are visible from the port of Seleucia. It was the birthplace of Barnabas. The island was one hundred and forty miles in length, by about fifty in breadth, half as large as all Palestine, fruitful, healthful, and populous. But it was dedicated to Venus, and its heathen inhabitants were plunged in debauchery and vice.

The Christian missionaries landed at Salamis, a seaport on the south eastern extremity of the island, and thence travelled, probably, through the great central valley road, to Paphos, the capital, on the northwestern extremity. Here was the residence of the Roman *Præconsul*. Here also was the celebrated temple of the Paphian Venus. But here Christianity won its crowning victory—in the conversion of the governor.

they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. From thence they removed to Paphos, the residence of Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, and made him a convert to the faith.

St. Paul, after this remarkable success in Cyprus, repaired to Perga, in Pamphylia,* and taking another with him, in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jerusalem, travelled to Antioch, the metropolis of Pisidia,† where they preached with great success.

From Antioch, in Pisidia, they went to Iconium,‡ the metropolis of Lycaonia, where they entered into the synagogue of the Jews, notwithstanding the ill-treatment they had met with from the Jews in other places. Driven at length from thence, they went to Lystra, another city of Lycaonia, on the coast, where they preached the gospel.

Among the converts at Lystra, was a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked. But Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be

* Perga, the capital of western Pamphylia, was situated on the river Cestrus, some distance from the coast. It was famous for a temple to Diana. Here the Christian missionaries passed up the valley of the Cestrus to the central uplands of Asia Minor. The region was rough and dangerous, abounding in swollen streams and the haunts of robbers. As they ascended to Pisidia on the north, the province of Cilicia was on the right and Lycia on the left.

† Pisidia was a province in the mountain range of Taurus, consisting of high table land. It lay between Phrygia and Lycaonia.

‡ Iconium was then one of the largest and most opulent cities of Asia Minor. It is in a fertile plain, one hundred and thirty miles north of the sea, and two hundred and sixty east of Constantinople. Many Jews resorted thither for trade, and established their synagogues.

saved, thought proper to add the cure of his body to that of his soul.

But the malice of the Jews still pursued them; for some of these bigoted Israelites coming from Antioch and Iconium, exasperated and stirred up the multitude; so that those very persons who could hardly be restrained from offering sacrifice to them, now used them like slaves, stoning them in so cruel a manner that Paul was thought to be dead; and as such they dragged him out of the city; but while the Christians of Lystra were attending on his body, probably in order to carry him to the grave, he arose, and returned with them into the city, and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the gospel, and converted many; no danger being able to terrify them from publishing the glad tidings of salvation in every place.

They did not, however, long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Pisidia, confirming the Christians of those places in the faith, earnestly persuading them to persevere, and not to be discouraged with those troubles and persecutions, which they must expect would attend the profession of the gospel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders and pastors, to teach, to instruct, and to watch over them; and then left them to the protection of the Almighty, to whose care they recommended them by prayer and fasting.

After leaving Antioch, they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia; and after preaching the gospel at Perga, they went down to Attalia, a seaport on the coast of Pamphylia.

Having thus finished the circuit of their ministry, they returned back to Antioch, in Syria, from whence they at first departed. Here they summoned the church, and gave them an account of their ministry, the success it had met in different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the conversion of the Gentile world.

The controversy concerning the observation of Jewish ceremonies in the Christian church, being decided in favor of St. Paul, he and his companions returned back to Antioch; and soon after Peter himself came down. On reading the decretal epistle in the church, the converts conversed freely and inoffensively with the Gentiles, till some of the Jews coming thither from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew his conversation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By such a strange method of proceeding, the minds of many were dissatisfied, and their consciences very uneasy. St. Paul, with the greatest concern, observed it, and publicly rebuked Peter, with that faithfulness and severity his unwarrantable practice deserved, and with most happy effect.

Soon after this event, Paul and Barnabas resolved to visit the churches they had planted among the Gentiles, and Barnabas was desirous of taking with them his nephew Mark; but this Paul strenuously opposed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling dispute arose to such a height, that these two great apostles and fellow-laborers in the gospel parted: Barnabas taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus, his native country, and Paul having made choice of Silas, and being recommended by the church to the care of divine Providence, set forward on his intended journey.

They first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming the people in the faith, by their instructions and exhortations. Hence they sailed to Crete,* where Paul preached the gospel. From hence Paul and Silas returned back to Cilicia, and came to Lystra, where they found Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother a Jewish convert, under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, especially with regard to the Holy Scriptures. This person St. Paul designed for the companion of his travels, and a special instrument in the ministry of the gospel. But knowing that his being uncircumcised would prove a stumbling-block to the Jews, he caused him to be circumcised; being willing, in lawful and indifferent matters, to conform himself to the tempers and apprehensions of men, in order to save their souls.

St. Paul and his companions departed from Lystra, passed through Phrygia, and the country of Galatia, where the apostle was entertained with the greatest kindness and veneration, the people looking upon him as an angel sent immediately from heaven; and being by revelation forbidden to go into Asia,† he was commanded by a second vision to repair to Macedonia, to

* Crete (now called Candia) is a large island in the Mediterranean, directly south of the Ægean sea. It is larger than Cyprus. It was probably settled by a colony from Egypt, but in the time of the apostles was almost wholly Greek. They bore a very bad name for lying, gluttony, and brutality. It once contained over a million of inhabitants, and abounded in the riches of nature and art. Homer celebrates it for its hundred cities. Its highest mountain, Ida, is seven thousand feet high.

† Asia here denotes that southwestern province of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital. It was settled by Greeks, and was distinguished as Proconsular Asia.

preach the gospel. Accordingly our apostle prepared at Troas* to pass from Asia into Europe.

Here St. Luke joined them, and became, ever after, the inseparable companion of St. Paul, who being desirous of finding the speediest passage into Macedonia, took ship with his companions, Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an island in the Ægean sea, not far from Thrace; and the next day he went to Neapolis, a port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, where they stayed some days.

In this city, Paul, according to his constant practice, preached in a *proseûcha*, or oratory of the Jews, which stood by the river side, at some distance from the city, and was much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met there to pray, and hear the law.† And after several days, as they were repairing to the same place of devotion, there met them a damsel who possessed a spirit of divination, by whom her masters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us

* Troas, south of the Hellespont, on the eastern shore of the Ægean sea, was a maritime city in the province of Mysia, north of Proconsular Asia. It was named after the ancient Troy of Homeric song, and built up by the Greeks and Romans.

† Philippi lay in a spacious plain, ten miles northwest from Neapolis, which was its seaport. The plain was well watered by streams, of which the one nearest the city was the Gangas; the Strymon, on the western side, being more remote.

The Jews were too few in the city to build a synagogue, but they built a *proseuche*, or place of prayer, by the river side, for the sake of their ablutions.

the way of salvation !” Paul, at first, took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without necessity. But when he saw her following them several days together, he commanded the spirit, in the name of Jesus, to come out of her. The evil spirit with reluctance obeyed, and left the damsel that very instant.*

This miraculous cure proving a great loss to her masters, who acquired large gains from her soothsaying, they were filled with envy and malice against the apostles ; and, by their instigation, the multitude arose and seized upon Paul and his companions, hurried them before the Roman magistrates ; accusing them of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the state, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans.

The magistrates, being concerned for the tranquillity of the state, and jealous of all disturbances, were very forward to punish the offenders, against whom great numbers of the multitude testified ; and therefore commanded the officers to strip them, and scourge them severely, as seditious persons.

This was accordingly executed ; after which the apostles were committed to close custody, the jailer receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them safely ; and he accordingly thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But the most obscure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of the night, cannot intercept the beams of divine joy and comfort from the souls of pious men. Their minds were all serenity ; and at mid-

* Christ refused testimony from evil spirits, because he would not have his holy cause thus brough into disrepute. Paul acted, in this case, upon the same principle.

night they prayed and sang praises so loud, that they were heard in every part of the prison. Nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain : an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors, loosed the chains, and set the prisoners at liberty.

This convulsion of nature roused the jailer from his sleep, and concluding from what he saw that all his prisoners were escaped, he was going to put a period to his life ; but Paul observing him, hastily cried, “ Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.” The keeper was now as greatly surprised at the goodness of the apostles, as he was before terrified at the thoughts of their escape : and calling for a light, he came immediately into the presence of the apostles, fell down at their feet, and took them from the dungeon, brought them to his own house, washed their stripes, and begged of them to instruct him in the knowledge of that God who was so mighty to save.

St. Paul readily granted his request, and replied, That, if he believed in Jesus Christ, he might be saved with his whole house ; accordingly, the jailer, with all his family, were, after a competent instruction, baptized, and received as members of the church of Christ.

As soon as it was day, the magistrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harsh and unjustifiable, sent their sergeant to the jailer, with orders to discharge the apostles. The jailer joyfully delivered the message, and bid them “ depart in peace ;” but Paul, that he might make the magistrates sensible what injury they had done them, and how unjustly they had punished them, without examination or trial, sent them word, that, as they thought

proper to scourge and imprison Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they should come themselves and make them some satisfaction.

The magistrates were terrified at this message. They came therefore to the prison, and very submissively entreated the apostles to depart without any further disturbance.

This small recompense for the cruel usage they had received, was accepted by the meek followers of the blessed Jesus. They left the prison, and retired to the house of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance, and departed, having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as it appears from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions continued their journey toward the west till they came to Thessalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, about a hundred and twenty miles from Philippi.* On their arrival at Thessalonica, Paul, according to his custom, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his countrymen. His doctrine, however, was strenuously opposed by the Jews, who would not allow Jesus to be the Messiah, because of his ignominious death.

Accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, intending to take Paul,

* Thessalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, rises majestically from the sea, and is still one of the greatest maritime cities on the Ægean, with a population of seventy thousand souls. It is now called Salonica, an abridgment of its former name. It is situated at the head of the Thermean Gulf. It flourished greatly under the Romans, and the church here planted by the apostle became a centre of light to distant cities, and a generous contributor to the wants of the saints in Judea. Two epistles of Paul were written to this church, A. D. 52.

and deliver him up to an incensed multitude. But in this they were disappointed; Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Christians, and concealed in some other part of the city and finally sent away by night to Beræa, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. These Jews were of a more ingenuous and candid temper than those of Thessalonica; and as they heard him, with great reverence and attention, expound and apply the Scriptures, so they searched diligently, whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and consonant to the sense of the texts he referred to. and having found every thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and several Gentiles, following their example, became obedient to the faith, among whom were several women of quality. The news of this remarkable success was carried to Thessalonica, and greatly incensed the inveterate enemies of the gospel there, who accordingly repaired to Beræa, and raised tumults against the apostle: so that Paul, to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timothy, either less known or less envied, continued still there.

Paul, leaving Beræa, under the conduct of certain guides, it was said he designed to retire by sea out of Greece, that his restless enemies might cease their persecution; but the guides, according to Paul's order, brought him to Athens,* and left him after receiving

* Athens, the chief city of Attica, and "the eye of Greece," was situated on the Saronic Gulf, five miles from the sea, on a plain gently sloping to the southwest. Renowned alike for commerce, arms, arts, letters, philosophy; its colonies and its fame filled the ancient world. Its great

from him an order for Silas and Timotheus to repair to him as soon as possible.

While St. Paul continued at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate survey of the city, which he found miserably overrun with superstition and idolatry.

Their superstitious practices grieved the spirit of the apostle; accordingly, he exerted all his strength for their conversion; he disputed on the sabbath days in the synagogues of the Jews, and at other times took all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the coming of the Messiah to save the world.

This doctrine was equally new and strange to the Athenians; and though they did not persecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching Jesus was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers† as a fabulous legend, and by the more sober part as a discovery of some new gods, which they had not yet placed in their temples: and though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet as the Areopagus, the supreme

names are immortal, but it was ignorant of the true God, and overrun with idolatry. Athens was called "the City of Minerva," and the famous Parthenon was dedicated to her glory.

† The two most celebrated sects of Athenian philosophers were the Stoics and Epicureans. The former were the followers of Zeno, and their doctrine was that a wise man should be indifferent alike to good and evil; that all things are subject to fate, even the gods; that pain is no evil; and that a man who proudly bears all the trials of life without flinching is superior to the gods themselves. They admitted a Paradise, and a possible immortality of the soul, but held the body not worthy of a glorious resurrection. The latter, the followers of Epicurus, placed all happiness in the free gratification of worldly desire, and denied a God, a Providence, or a Future State. Bitterly as they were opposed to each other they were alike opposed to the principles and spirit of Christianity.

court of the city, was to judge of all gods, to whom public worship might be allowed, they brought him before those judges, to give an account of his doctrine.

Paul, being placed before the judges of this high assembly, readily gave them an account of his doctrine, in a grave and elegant speech; wherein, having commended them for their religious dispositions, he took occasion, from the altar inscribed to the "Unknown God," to make a proper defence of his doctrine. "I endeavor," said he, "only to explain that altar to you, and manifest the nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worship. The true God is he that made the world, and all things therein; and who, being Lord of all, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is to be worshipped in lifeless idols. As he is the Creator of all things, he cannot be confined to the workmanship of man, whether temples or statues; nor stand in need of sacrifices, since he is the fountain of life to all things. He made from one common original the whole race of mankind, and hath wisely determined their dependence on him, that they might be obliged to seek after him and serve him. A truth perceivable in the darkest state of ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your own poets. If this be the nature of God, it is surely the highest absurdity to represent him by an image or similitude. The divine patience has been too much exercised already with such gross abuses in religion, but now expects a thorough reformation, having sent his Son Jesus Christ to make him known to the world, and at the same time to inform them that he had appointed a day of general judgment, when the religion of mankind shall be tried by the test of the gospel, before his only begotten Son, who is

appointed sole judge of the quick and dead, and whose commission to that high office hath been ratified by the Almighty, in raising him from the dead."

On his mentioning the resurrection, some of the philosophers mocked and derided him; others, more modest, but not satisfied with the proofs he had given, gravely answered, "We would hear thee again of this matter." After which Paul departed from the court; but not without some success: for a few of his distinguished auditors believed and attended his instructions.

Thus boldly did this intrepid servant and soldier of Jesus Christ assert the cause of his divine Master, among the great, the wise, and the learned, and reason with great persuasion and eloquence on the nature of God, and the manner in which he has commanded his creatures to worship him, even in spirit and in truth.

During St. Paul's stay at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him, out of Macedonia, and brought an account that the Christians at Thessalonica were under persecution from their fellow-citizens, ever since his departure: at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at first inclined to visit them in person, to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the enemies of the gospel, he sent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at first heard, namely, that persecution would be the constant attendant on their profession.

On Timothy's departure, St. Paul left Athens, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade.*

* Corinth, forty-six miles west of Athens, was the capital of all Achaia, the residence of the Roman governor or Proconsul, and the most mag-

After some stay at Corinth, the apostle was joined by Silas and Timothy, and disputed frequently in the synagogue, reasoning and proving that Jesus was the true Messiah.

During his stay at Corinth, he wrote his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to supply his absence. In this epistle he again endeavors to confirm their minds in the truth of the gospel, and prevent their being shaken with those troubles which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raising against them.

St. Paul, on his leaving the church at Corinth, took ship at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla; and on his arrival at Ephesus, he preached awhile in the synagogue of the Jews promising to return to them, after keeping the passover at Jerusalem. Accordingly, he again took ship, and landed at Cesaræa, and from thence travelled to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast, visited the church, and then repaired to Antioch. Here he stayed some time, and then traversed the countries of Galatia* and Phrygia, confirming the newly converted Christians, till

nificent of Grecian cities. It was situated on the isthmus that divides Southern from Northern Greece, midway between the Ægean and Ionian seas, with a port on each: Cenchrea on the east and Sechæum on the west. Its Acropolis rose to the height of two thousand feet, and afforded a splendid prospect. Its position for commerce was unrivalled, and its wealth overflowing. But its moral condition was most debased and revolting, as may be judged from the fact that Neptune and Venus were its tutelar deities, and that prostitution was made a part of their religion.

* Galatia was a province of Asia Minor, lying between Pisidia on the east and Phrygia on the west, on the high table land. Ancyra was its capital, and it contained many populous cities. The inhabitants were a mixed race of Gauls and Greeks, quick and ardent in temperament. Paul's first labors among them had been eminently successful.

he came to Ephesus,* where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica, Erastus of Corinth, Timotheus, and Titus.

Here he continued to preach the gospel; by which means the Jews and proselytes had an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of salvation; and because miracles are the clearest evidence of a divine commission, the Almighty was pleased to certify the doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature; for he not only healed those who came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the sick, their diseases immediately vanished, and the evil spirits departed out of those that were possessed by them.

About this time the apostle wrote his epistle to the Galatians; for he had heard that, since his departure, corrupt opinions had crept in among them, with regard to the necessity of observing the legal rites. Here also he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, and sent it by the hands of Titus.

* Ephesus, the capital of Proconsular Asia (the ancient Ionia), was situated on the river Cayster, about forty miles southeast of Smyrna. Its trade and population were very great. It was the queen city of Asia Minor, and specially celebrated for its magic arts and its magnificent temple of Diana, counted as one of the seven wonders of the world. It was the very centre of ancient superstition—the throne of Satan's power. Many Jews, however, had settled there, like Lot in Sodom, for purposes of trade, and among them disciples of John the Baptist from Judea, and disciples of Christ, banished from Rome by the decree of Claudius Cæsar, A. D. 50. Paul preached here for three years, and the apostle John afterward made it the centre of his labors for the last thirty years of his protracted life.

Soon after the great tumult at Ephesus, about the goddess Diana, Paul called the Christians together, and took his leave of them with the most tender expressions of love and affection. He had now spent almost three years at Ephesus, and founded there a very considerable church. He first travelled about two hundred miles northward, to Troas, before he took ship, expecting to meet Titus there. But missing him, he proceeded on his voyage to Macedonia.

On his arrival there, he preached the gospel in the principal places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Slavonia. During this journey he met with many troubles and dangers, "without were fightings, and within were fears;" but God who comforteth those that are cast down, revived his spirits by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleasing account of the good effects his epistle had produced at Corinth.

During the stay of Titus in Macedonia, Paul wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians, and sent it to them by Titus and Luke.

About this time also, some suppose, he wrote his first epistle to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus.

During his stay in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his famous epistle to the Romans, which he sent by Phoebe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth.

St. Paul being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions of the Gentile churches to the brethren at Jerusalem, set out on his journey; but being informed that the Jews had formed a design of killing and robbing him by the way, came to Philippi, from whence he sailed to Troas, where he stayed seven

days. Here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his discourse till midnight, being himself about to depart in the morning.

On his arrival at Miletus,* he sent to Ephesus, to summon the elders of the church; and, on their coming, reminded them of the manner in which he had conversed among them, how faithfully and affectionately he had discharged the offices of his ministry, and how incessantly he had labored for the good of the souls of men: adding, that he had never failed to acquaint them, both in public and private, with whatever might be useful and profitable to them, urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance, and reformation of life, and a hearty perseverance in the faith of Christ: that he was now going up to Jerusalem, where he was ignorant of what might befall him, except what had been foretold him by those who were endued with the prophetic gifts of the Holy Ghost; namely, that afflictions and imprisonment would attend him; but that this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the gospel required it, and fully determined to serve faithfully his great Lord and Master.

St. Paul, having finished his touching discourse, kneeled down, and joined with them in prayer; and they all melted into tears, and, with the greatest expressions of sorrow, attended him to the ship, grieving in the most passionate manner for what he had told them, "that they should see his face no more."

* Miletus was a maritime city, thirty miles to the south of Ephesus, and near the mouth of the ancient river Meander. It was famous for its antiquity, its many colonies, its distinguished men, and a temple of Apollo Didymus.

Paul, with his companions, now departed from Miletus, and arrived at Coos, from whence they sailed the next day to Rhodes, a large island in the Ægean sea. Leaving this place, they came to Patara, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another vessel bound for Tyre, in Phœnicia. On his arrival, he visited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was advised by some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jerusalem. But the apostle would by no means abandon his design, or refuse to suffer any thing, provided he might spread the gospel of his Saviour. Finding all persuasions were in vain, they jointly accompanied him to the shore, where he kneeled down, and prayed with them; and, after embracing them with the utmost affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Cæsarea.

During their stay in this place, Agabus, a Christian prophet, came thither from Judea, who, taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it, signifying, by this symbol, that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him over to the Gentiles. Whereupon both his own companions, and the Christians of Cæsarea, earnestly besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem. But the apostle asked them, if they intended by these passionate dissuasives to add more affliction to his sorrow. "For I am ready," continued he, "not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When the disciples found that his resolution was not to be shaken, they importuned him no further, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleasure of the Most High. And, all things being ready, Paul and

his companions set forward on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Christians on their arrival at Jerusalem.

While here the unbelieving Jews raised a tumult against Paul, and would have beaten him to death, but for the interference of Lysias, the captain of the Roman guard, by whom he was sent down to Cæsarea for trial, before Felix, the Roman governor.

Our apostle, soon after his arrival at Cæsarea, encountered Tertullus,* who, in a short, but eloquent speech, began to accuse him, charging him with sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple.

The orator having finished his charge against the apostle, Felix † told St. Paul that he was now at liberty to make his defence, which he did.

Felix having thus heard both parties, refused to pass any final sentence, till he had more fully advised about it; adding that St. Paul should be kept under a guard, but at the same time enjoy the liberty of being visited by his friends, and receiving from them any office of friendship.

* The Jews not being acquainted with the judicial forms of Roman law, employed Roman or Greek advocates to plead for them. Tertullus was an advocate of this class. The Greek language was often used in Roman courts, as being more generally understood in the provinces.

† Felix was originally a slave, but was emancipated and elevated by Claudius Cæsar, who conferred on him his name of Claudius. His character, according to Tacitus, was base, licentious, and cruel. When appointed governor of Judea (A. D. 52), he enticed Drusilla, sister of Agrippa, from her husband, and married her. He exerted all his energy to suppress robbers, but is charged with being in collusion with them, and his avarice and oppression were intolerable. On his return to Rome (A. D. 60), he was tried and condemned for mal-administration.

Here Paul remained two years, until Felix was succeeded by Festus.*

Some time after, king Agrippa,† who succeeded Herod in the Tetrarchate of Galilee, and his sister Bernice, came to Cæsarea to visit the new governor. Festus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the case of our apostle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occasioned among the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæsar. This account excited the curiosity of king Agrippa, and he was desirous of hearing himself what St. Paul had to say in his own vindication.

Accordingly, the next day, the king and his sister, accompanied with Festus the governor, and several other persons of distinction, came into the court with a pompous and splendid retinue, where the prisoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Festus informed the court how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Cæsarea and Jerusalem, to put the prisoner to

* Pontius Festus, who succeeded Felix in the government of Judea, was a man of much better character. His administration is well spoken of by Josephus, as vigorous and just. He died two years after he came into office. To his justice Paul owed the success of his appeal to Cæsar.

† Herod Agrippa II. (or the younger Agrippa) was the son of Herod Agrippa I., the Herod who slew James, the brother of John, Acts xii. He was educated at Rome, under the care of the Emperor Claudius, who first gave him (A. D. 47) the small kingdom of Chalcis, but in A. D. 53 transferred him to the region east of the Jordan, over which his father had reigned at first—Abilene, Bataneu, Trachonitis, and Auranitis—with the title of king. He took part with the Romans in the Jewish war, and protected the Christians in his dominions. He died in the third year of Trajan, A. D. 100, aged seventy. In Josephus and in the New Testament he is called Agrippa only.

His sister Bernice was twice married, but later in life became the mistress of Vespasian and Titus.

death as a malefactor ; but having, on examination, found him guilty of no capital crime, and the prisoner himself having appealed unto Cæsar, he was determined to send him to Rome ; but was willing to have his cause debated before Agrippa, that he might be furnished with some material particulars to send with him ; it being highly absurd to send a prisoner without signifying the crimes alleged against him.

Festus having finished his speech, Agrippa told Paul he was now at liberty to make his own defence ; and silence being made, he delivered his famous speech, particularly to Agrippa. (See Acts. xxvi.)

While the apostle thus pleaded for himself, Festus cried out : “ Paul thou art mad ; too much study hath deprived thee of thy reason.” But Paul answered : “ I am far, most noble Festus, from being transported with idle and distracted ideas. The words I speak are dictated by truth and sobriety. And I am persuaded that the king Agrippa himself is not ignorant of these things, for they were transacted openly before the world. I am confident, king Agrippa, that thou believest the prophets, and therefore must know all their predictions were fulfilled in Christ.” To which Agrippa answered : “ Thou hast almost persuaded me to embrace the Christian faith.” Paul replied : “ I sincerely wish that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were not almost, but altogether, the same as I myself, except being prisoners.”

It being now finally determined that Paul should be sent to Rome, he was, with several other prisoners of consequence, committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Augus-

tus ; and was accompanied in his voyage by St. Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others not mentioned by the sacred historian.

In the month of September, they embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, and sailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteously gave the apostle leave to go on shore to visit his friends and refresh himself.

After a short stay they sailed for Cyprus, and arrived opposite the Fair-Havens. Here the season being far advanced, and Paul foreseeing it would be a dangerous voyage, persuaded them to put in and winter there. But the Roman centurion, preferring the opinion of the master of the ship, and the harbor being at the same time incommodious, resolved if possible to reach Phœnice, a port of Crete, and winter there. But they soon found themselves disappointed ; for the fine southerly gale which had favored them for some time, suddenly changed into a stormy and tempestuous wind at north-east, which blew with such violence that the ship was obliged to drive before it ; and to prevent her sinking, they threw overboard the principal part of her lading.

In this desperate and uncomfortable condition they continued fourteen days, and on the fourteenth night the mariners discovered they were near some coast ; and therefore, to avoid the rocks, thought proper to come to an anchor till the morning might give them better information.

During the time they continued at anchor, waiting for the light of the morning, St. Paul prevailed upon them to eat and refresh themselves, they having fasted a long time, assuring them they should all escape.

The country near which they were, was, as Paul had

foretold, an island called Melita, now Malta, situated between Sicily and Africa. Here they landed, and met with great civility from the people, who treated them with humanity, and entertained them with every necessary accommodation. But whilst St. Paul was laying a few sticks on the fire, a viper, enlivened by the heat, came from among the wood and fastened on his hand. On seeing this, the inhabitants of the island concluded that he was certainly some notorious murderer, whom the divine vengeance, though it suffered him to escape the sea, had reserved for a more public and solemn execution. But when they saw him shake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm ensue, they changed their sentiments, and cried out "that he was a god."

After three months' stay in this island, the centurion with his charge went on board the *Castor and Pollux*, a ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuse,* where they tarried three days; then they sailed to Rhegium; and from thence to Puteoli, where they landed—and finding some Christians there, stayed,

* Syracuse, now called Siragisa, lies directly north of Malta, on the eastern coast of Sicily. It has a noble and capacious harbor. The city was much celebrated by the ancient writers for its great size, commerce, wealth, and enterprise, and as the birthplace of the famous mathematician Archimedes. It contained three hundred thousand inhabitants; now it has but thirteen thousand.

Rhegium (now called Reggio) is on the western coast of Calabria, in the south of Italy, eight miles southeast from Messina in Sicily, across the straits. It is still a flourishing seaport.

Puteoli is a maritime town on the western shore of Italy, just north of the Bay of Naples, and about eight miles from that noble city. It is now called Pazzuoli. It stands on a small peninsula, and contains about fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is surrounded with splendid scenery, by sea and land. Vesuvius towers in the distance on the east

at their request, a week with them, and then set forward on their journey to Rome. The Christians of this latter city, hearing of the apostle's coming, went to meet him as far as the distance of about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the Apii-Forum, fifty-one miles distant from the capital. They kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he saw the Christians enjoy at Rome, and the love they manifested to him, greatly tended to enliven the spirits of the apostle.

Having refreshed himself after the fatigue of his voyage, the apostle sent for the heads of the Jewish consistory at Rome, and related to them the cause of his coming, in the following manner: "Though I have been guilty of no violation of the laws of our religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jerusalem to the Roman governors, who more than once would have acquitted me as innocent of any capital offence; but, by the perverseness of my persecutors, I was obliged to appeal unto Cæsar. Not that I had any thing to accuse my nation of: I had recourse to this method merely to clear my own innocence."

Having thus removed a popular prejudice, he added, "That the true cause of his sufferings was, that their own religion had taught him 'the belief and expectation of a future resurrection.'" But his discourse had different effects on different hearers, some being convinced, and others persisting in their infidelity.

For two whole years Paul dwelt at Rome, in a house he had hired for his own use; wherein he assiduously employed himself in preaching and writing for the good of the church, especially his admirable Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Christians of Philippi, hearing of St. Paul's being at Rome, and not knowing what distress he might be reduced to, raised a contribution for him, and sent it by Epaphroditus; by whom he returned an epistle to them, wherein he gives some account of the state of his affairs at Rome.

Here, also, he wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, and sent them by the hands of Tychicus, and Onesimus, a converted slave.

By what means St. Paul was discharged from the accusation the Jews brought against him, we have no account in history; but it is natural to suppose, that not having sufficient proof of what they alleged, or being informed that the crimes they accused him of were no violation of the Roman laws, they durst not implead him before the Emperor, and so permitted him to be discharged of course. But, by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his salutations.

The principal design of it is to magnify Christ and the religion of the gospel above Moses and the Jewish economy, in order to establish and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding the trouble and persecutions that would certainly attend them.

Having thus discharged his ministry, both by preaching and writing, in Italy, St. Paul, accompanied by Timothy, prosecuted his long intended journey into Spain; and, according to the testimony of several writers, crossed the sea and preached the gospel in Britain.

What success he had in these western parts is not

known: he, however, continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the east, visited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired to Rome.

Here he met with Peter, and was, together with him, thrown into prison, doubtless in the general persecution raised against the Christians, under pretence that they had set fire to the city. How long he remained in prison is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was scourged before his execution. He was, however, allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore, six months after writing his second epistle to Timothy, was beheaded.

Being come to the place of execution, which was the *Aquæ Salviæ*, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a solemn preparation, gave his neck to the fatal stroke; and from this vale of misery passed to the blissful regions of immortality, to the kingdom of his beloved Master, the great Redeemer of the human race.

He was buried in the *Via Ostiensis*, about two miles from Rome; and about the year 317, Constantine the Great, at the instance of Sylvester, built a stately church over his grave, adorned it with an hundred marble columns, and beautified it with the most exquisite workmanship.



ST. ANDREW.

THIS apostle was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth, and was son to John, or Jonas, a fisherman of that town. He

was brother to Simon Peter, but whether older or younger is not certainly known, though the generality of the ancients intimate that he was the younger. He was brought up to his father's trade, at which he labored till our blessed Saviour called him to be a fisher of men, for which he was, by some preparatory instructions, qualified even before the appearance of the Messiah, under John the Baptist.

In the number of his followers was our apostle, who accompanied him beyond Jordan, when the Messiah, who had some time before been baptized, came that way. Upon his approach, the Baptist pointed him out as the Messiah, styling him the Lamb of God, the true sacrifice that was to expiate the sins of the world. As soon as the Baptist had given this character of Jesus, Andrew and another disciple, probably John, followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode.

After some conversation with him, Andrew departed, and having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had discovered the great Messiah, so long expected by the house of Jacob, and accordingly brought him to Jesus. They did not, however, stay long with their Master, but returned to their calling.

Something more than a year after, Jesus, passing along the shore, found Andrew and Peter fishing on the sea of Galilee, where he fully satisfied them of the greatness and divinity of his person, by a miraculous draught of fishes, which they took at his command. He now told them that they should enter on a different series of labors, and instead of fish, should, by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine upon the heart and conscience, catch men; commanding them to follow him,

as his immediate disciples and attendants; and accordingly they left all and followed him.

After the ascension of the blessed Jesus into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, to qualify them for their great undertaking, St. Andrew, according to the generality of ancient writers, was chosen to preach the gospel in Scythia, and the neighboring countries.

Accordingly he departed from Jerusalem, and first travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, instructing the inhabitants in the faith of Christ, and continued his journey along the Euxine sea, into the deserts of Scythia. An ancient author tells us, that he first came to Amisus,* where, being entertained by a Jew, he went into the synagogue, preached to them concerning Jesus, and from the prophecies of the Old Testament proved him to be the Messiah, and Saviour of the world. Having converted many here, he settled the times of their public meetings, and ordained them pastors.

He went next to Trapezium, a maritime city on the

* Amisus was a large and beautiful Greek city in Pontus, on the Amisian gulf. Trapezium (or Trapezus, now Trebisond) was a colony of Greeks from Sinope. It lay on the south side of the Black sea, in the northeast of Pontus. Nicca, or Nice, was a famous city of Bithynia, on the Propontis, and gave its name to the first great Christian Council assembled by Constantine, A. D. 325. Nicomedia, afterward the residence of the Emperor Diresian, was farther north in the same province. Chalcedon was a flourishing city of Bithynia, in the northeast corner of Asia Minor, opposite to Byzantium (Constantinople.) It was afterward the seat of a Christian Council, A. D. 451. Heraclea, on the Euxine (or Black sea), was a Greek colony, famous for its navy, its library, and rich temples. Amastris lay in the eastern part of Paphlagonia, not far from Sinope.

Euxine sea; from whence, after visiting many other places, he came to Nice, where he stayed two years, preaching and working miracles with great success. After leaving Nice, he passed to Nicomedia, and from thence to Chalcedon, whence he sailed through the Propontis, came by the Euxine sea to Heraclea, and afterward to Amastris. In all these places he met with the greatest difficulties, but overcame them by an invincible patience and resolution.

He next came to Sinope, a city situated on the same sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of King Mithridates; here he met with his brother Peter, and stayed with him a considerable time. The inhabitants of Sinope were mostly Jews, who partly from a zeal for their religion, and partly from their barbarous manners, were exasperated against St. Andrew, and entered into a confederacy to burn the house in which he lodged. But being disappointed in their design, they treated him with the most savage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, stamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place; some beating him with clubs, some pelting him with stones, and others, to satisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his flesh with their teeth; till apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they cast him out into the fields. But he miraculously recovered, and returned publicly into the city; by which and other miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from the error of their ways, and induced them to become disciples of the blessed Jesus.

Departing from Sinope, he returned to Jerusalem; but he did not continue long in that neighborhood. He

returned again to the province allotted him for the exercise of his ministry, which greatly flourished through the power of the divine grace that attended it.

He travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus, preaching the gospel, propagating Christianity, and then confirming the doctrine he taught with signs and miracles. At last he came to Petrea, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony to the gospel of his divine Master, sealing it with his blood.

Ægenas, proconsul of Achaia, came at this time to Petrea,* where, observing that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion, and embraced the gospel of Christ, he had recourse to every method, both of favor and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The apostle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his ministry, addressed himself to the proconsul, calmly putting him in mind that, being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the supreme and impartial Judge of all; observing to him that if he would renounce his idolatries, and heartily embrace the Christian faith, he should, with him and the numbers who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal happiness in the Messiah's kingdom. The proconsul answered, that he himself should never embrace the religion he mentioned; and that the only reason why he was so earnest with him to sacrifice to the gods was that those whom he had everywhere seduced might, by his example, be brought back to the ancient religion they had forsaken. The apostle replied, that with re-

* More properly Patrae (the modern Patras), on the northwest corner of the Peloponnesus or Morea.

gard to himself, he might act as he pleased, and if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him; as the greater constancy he showed in his sufferings for Christ, the more acceptable he should be to his Lord and Master. Ægenas, after treating him with very opprobrious language, passed sentence on him that he should be put to death.

He first ordered the apostle to be scourged, and seven lictors successively whipped his naked body; but seeing his invincible patience and constancy, he commanded him to be crucified; but to be fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious.

On his coming near the cross, he saluted it in the following manner: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it, and adorned with his members as with so many inestimable jewels. I therefore come joyfully and triumphing to it, that it may receive me as a disciple and follower of him, who once hung upon it, and be the means of carrying me safe to my Master, being the instrument on which he redeemed me."

After offering up his prayer to the throne of grace, and exhorting the people to constancy and perseverance in the faith he had delivered them, he was fastened to the cross, on which he hung two whole days, teaching and instructing the people in the best manner his wretched situation would admit, being sometimes so weak and faint as scarce to have the power of utterance.

In the meantime great interest was made to the consul to spare his life; but the apostle earnestly begged of the Almighty that he might now depart, and seal the

truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he expired on the last day of November, but in what year is uncertain.

There seems to have been something peculiar in the form of the cross on which he suffered. It was commonly thought to have been a cross decussate, or two pieces of timber crossing each other in the centre, in the form of the letter X, and hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross.

His body being taken down from the cross, was decently and honorably interred by Maximilla, a lady of great quality and estate, and whom Nicephorus tells us, was wife to the proconsul.



ST. JAMES THE GREAT.

THIS apostle (who was surnamed the Great, by way of distinction from another of that name) was the son of Zebedee, and by trade a fisherman, to which he applied himself with remarkable assiduity, and was exercising his employment, when the Saviour of the world, passing by the sea of Galilee, saw him with his brother in the ship, and called them both to be his disciples.

Soon after this he was called from the station of an ordinary disciple to the apostolic office, and even honored with some particular favors beyond most of the apostles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of as his companions in the more intimate transactions of his life, from which the rest were excluded

Thus, with Peter and his brother John, he attended his Master when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; he was admitted to Christ's glorious transfiguration on the mount; and when the holy Jesus was to undergo his bitter agonies in the garden, as preparatory sufferings to his passion, James was one of the three taken to be a spectator of them. Nor was it the least instance of that particular honor our Lord conferred on these apostles, that at his calling them to the apostleship he gave them a new name and title. Simon he called Peter, or a rock; and James and John, who were brothers, Boanerges, or the sons of thunder.

Some think that this name was given them on account of their bold preaching of the gospel, going on thundering in the ears of a drowsy and sleepy world.

But however this be, our blessed Saviour, doubtless, alluded by this term to the disposition of these two brothers, who seem to have been of a more fiery temper than the rest of the apostles, of which we have this memorable instance. When our Lord was determined on his private journey to Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles, he sent some of his disciples before him to make preparations for his unexpected coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, they were rudely rejected, from the old grudge that subsisted between the Samaritans and Jews, and because the Saviour, by going up to Jerusalem, seemed to slight their place of worship on Mount Gerizim. This piece of rudeness and inhumanity was so highly resented by St. James and his brother, that they came to Jesus, desiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling fire down from heaven to consume this barbarous, inhospitable people? But

the holy Jesus soon convinced them of their mistake, by telling them, that instead of destroying, he was come to save the lives of the children of men.

Sophronius tells us, that after the ascension of the blessed Jesus, this apostle preached to the dispersed Jews: that is, to those converts who dispersed after the death of Stephen. The Spanish writers will have it, that after preaching the gospel in several parts of Judea and Samaria, he visited Spain, where he planted Christianity, and appointed some select disciples to perfect what he had begun: but if we consider the shortness of St. James' life, and that the apostles continued in a body at Jerusalem, even after the dispersion of the other Christians, we shall find it difficult to allow time sufficient for so tedious and difficult a voyage as that was in those early ages; and therefore it is safest to confine his ministry to Judea and the adjacent countries.

Herod Agrippa I., who was a bigot to the Jewish religion, as well as desirous of the favor of the Jews, began a violent persecution of the Christians, A. D. 44, and his zeal animated him to pass sentence of death on James immediately. As he was led to the place of execution, it is said, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, having been converted by that remarkable courage and constancy shown by the apostle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the apostle's feet, and heartily begged pardon for what he had said against him. The holy man, after recovering from the surprise, tenderly embraced him. "Peace," said he, "my son, peace be unto thee, and pardon of thy faults." Upon which the officer publicly declared himself a Christian, and

both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell the great apostle James, taking cheerfully that cup of which he had long since told his Lord he was ready to drink.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

FROM the very minute and circumstantial account this Evangelist gives of John the Baptist, he is justly supposed to have been one of his followers, and to be that other disciple who, in the first chapter of his gospel, is said to have been present with Andrew, when John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God," and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his abode.

He was perhaps the youngest of the apostles, yet he was admitted into as great a share of his Master's confidence as any of them. He was one of those to whom he communicated the most private transactions of his life: one of those whom he took with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead: one of those to whom he displayed a specimen of his divinity, in his transfiguration on the mount; who were present at his conference with Moses and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him "the beloved Son of God;" and one of those who were companions in his solitude, most retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden.

These instances of particular favor, our apostle endeavored, in some measure, to answer by returns of particular kindness and constancy. For though he at first deserted his Master on his apprehension, yet he soon recovered himself, and came back to see his Saviour,

confidently entered the high-priest's hall, followed our Lord through the several particulars of his trial, and at last waited on him at his execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the midst of armed soldiers, and in the thickest crowd of his most inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his sorrowful and disconsolate mother, with his dying breath. And certainly the holy Jesus could not have given a more honorable testimony of his particular respect and kindness to St. John than by leaving his own mother to his trust and care, and substituting him to supply that duty himself paid her while he resided in this vale of sorrow.

After the ascension of the Saviour of the world, when the apostles made a division of the provinces among themselves, that of Proconsular Asia fell to the share of St. John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem till the death of the blessed Virgin, which might be about fifteen years after our Lord's ascension. Being released from the trust committed to his care by his dying Master, he retired into Asia,* and industriously applied himself to the propagation of Christianity, preaching where the gospel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his foundation, particularly those of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and others. But his chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where St. Paul had many years before founded a church.

* There is no proof that the apostle John was in Proconsular Asia until after the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70. The Acts and the Epistles of Paul forbid the supposition.

After spending many years at Ephesus, he was accused to Domitian, who had begun a persecution against the Christians, as an eminent assertor of atheism and impiety, and a public subverter of the religion of the empire; so that by his command the proconsul sent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from so barbarous a prince—being thrown (according to Tertullian) into a caldron of boiling oil. But the Almighty restrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this seemingly unavoidable destruction. But miracles themselves were not sufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury. He ordered St. John to be transported to an almost desolate island in the Archipelago, called Patmos, where he continued several years, instructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the Christian faith. And here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his book of Revelation, exhibiting by visions and prophetic representations the state and condition of Christianity in the future periods and ages of the church.

Upon the death of Domitian, and the succession of Nerva (A. D. 95), who repealed all the odious acts of his predecessor, and by public edicts recalled those whom the fury of Domitian had banished, St. John returned to Asia, and fixed his seat again at Ephesus;* the rather

* The position of Ephesus as a great maritime city, midway between Rome and Alexandria, made it the natural centre of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem. Here the venerable apostle could collect and authenticate before his death all the canonical writings of the New Testament. This important fact has been generally overlooked by writers on the Canon, though it is of itself sufficient to decide the question as to the canon of the Primitive Church.

because the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy. Here, in the best manner that the circumstances of those times would permit, he spent his time in an indefatigable execution of his charge, travelling from east to west, through Asia Minor, to instruct men in the principles of the holy religion he was sent to propagate.

In this manner St. John continued to labor in the vineyard of his great Master, until death put a period to all his toils and sufferings; which happened in the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age; and, according to Eusebius, his remains were buried near Ephesus.

St. John seems to have led a single life; though some of the ancients tell us he was a married man. He was polished by no study of arts or learning; but what was wanting from human art, was abundantly supplied by the excellent constitution of his mind, and that fulness of divine grace with which he was adorned. His humility was admirable, studiously concealing his own honor. For in his epistle he never styles himself either apostle or evangelist: the title of presbyter, or elder, is all he assumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office. In his gospel, when he speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he constantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to discover whom he meant.

The greatest instance of our apostle's care for the souls of men is in the writings he left to posterity, including his gospel, his three epistles, and his Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation.

Such is the character of this great apostle and evangelist, who was honored with the endearing title of being

the beloved disciple of the Son of God : a writer so profound as to deserve by way of eminence, the character of "St. John the Divine."

ST. PHILIP.

THIS apostle was a native of Bethsaida, "the city of Andrew and Peter." He had the honor of being first called to be a disciple of the great Messiah, which happened in the following manner: Our blessed Saviour, soon after his return from the wilderness, where he had been tempted by the devil, met with Andrew, and his brother Peter, and after some discourse parted from them. The next day, as he was passing to Galilee, he found Philip, whom he presently commanded to follow him, the constant form he made use of in calling his disciples, and those that inseparably attended him. So that the prerogative of being first called, evidently belongs to Philip.

It cannot be doubted, that notwithstanding Philip was a native of Galilee, yet he was skilled in the law and the prophets. Metaphrastes assures us, that he had, from his childhood, been excellently educated; that he frequently read over the books of Moses, and attentively considered the prophecies relating to the Messiah.

Nor was our apostle idle after the honor he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world; he immediately imparted the glad tidings of the

Messiah's appearance to his friend Nathaniel, and conducted him to Jesus.

After being called to the apostleship we have very little record of him by the evangelists. It was, however, to him that our Saviour proposed the question, where they should find bread sufficient to satisfy the hunger of so great a multitude. Philip answered, that it was not easy to procure so great a quantity; not considering that it was equally easy for Almighty power to feed double the number, when it should be his divine will. It was also to the same apostle that the Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, applied, when they were desirous to see the Saviour of the world. And it was with him our Lord had the discourse at the holy Supper.

The compassionate Jesus had been fortifying their minds with proper considerations against his departure from them, and had told them that he was going to prepare for them a place in the mansions of the heavenly Canaan; that he was "the way, the truth, and the life;" and that no man could come to the Father but by him.

Philip, not thoroughly understanding, begged of him, that he would "show them the Father." Our blessed Lord gently reproved his ignorance of the divine nature, and particularly, that after attending so long to his instructions, he should not know that he was the image of his Father—the express character of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, appearing in him.

The ancients tell us, that in the distribution made by the apostles of the several regions of the world, the Upper Asia fell to his share, where he labored with an

indefatigable diligence and industry. By the constancy and power of his preaching, and the efficacy of his miracles, he gained numerous converts, whom he baptized into the Christian faith, curing at once their bodies of infirmities and distempers, and their souls of errors and idolatry. He continued with them a considerable time in settling churches, and appointing them guides and ministers of religion.

After several years successsfully exercising his apostolical office in all those parts, he came at last to Hierapolis, in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but at the same time overrun with the most enormous idolatry.

St. Philip being grieved to see the people so wretchedly enslaved by error and superstition, continually offered his addresses to heaven, till by his prayers, calling on the name of Christ, he procured the death, or at least the disappearing, of an enormous serpent, to which they paid adoration.

Having thus demolished their deity, he demonstrated to them how ridiculous and unjust it was for them to pay divine honors to such odious creatures: showed them that God alone was to be worshipped as the great Parent of all the world, who in the beginning made man after his glorious image, and when fallen from that innocent and happy state, sent his own Son into the world to redeem him: that in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, and at the end of the world will come again to raise all the sons of men from the chambers of the dust, and sentence them to everlasting rewards or punishments. This discourse roused them from

their lethargy; they were ashamed of their late idolatry, and great numbers embraced the doctrines of the gospel.

This provoked the great enemy of mankind, and he had recourse to his old methods—cruelty and persecution. The magistrates of the city seized the apostle, and having thrown him into prison, caused him to be scourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and, being bound, was hanged against a pillar; or, according to others, crucified. The apostle being dead, his body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his fellow laborer in the gospel, and Marianne, St. Philip's sister, the constant companion of his travels, and decently buried; after which, they confirmed the people in the faith of Christ, and departed from them.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

THIS apostle is mentioned amongst the twelve immediate disciples of our Lord under the appellation of Bartholomew,* though it is evident, from divers passages of Scripture, that he was also called Nathaniel: we shall therefore, in our account of his life, consider the names of Nathaniel and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the same person.

With regard to his descent and family, some are of opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was descended

* The son of Ptolemy.

from the Ptolemies of Egypt. But it is plain, from the evangelical history, that he was a Galilean; St. John having expressly told us that Nathaniel was of Cana, in Galilee.

The Scripture is silent with regard to his trade and manner of life, though, from some circumstances, there is room to imagine that he was a fisherman. He was at the first coming to Christ, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long expected Messiah, so often foretold by Moses and the prophets, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And when he objected that the Messiah could not be born at Nazareth, Philip desired him to come and satisfy himself that Jesus was the Messiah.

At his approach, our blessed Saviour saluted him with this honorable appellation, that he was an "Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile;" not in an absolute, but restricted sense. In another sense, he appeared to "be a true Israelite," or one that "waited for redemption in Israel," which, from the times mentioned in the Scripture predictions, he knew to be near at hand.

He was greatly surprised at our Lord's salutation, wondering how he could know him at first sight, as imagining he had never before seen his face. But he was answered, that he had seen him while he was yet under the fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this instance of our Lord's divinity, he presently made his confession, that he was now sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah, that Son of God whom he had appointed to govern the church. Our blessed Saviour told him, that if from this instance he

could believe him to be the Messiah, he should have far greater arguments to confirm his faith; for that he should hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels visibly appearing joyful at his entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

Our apostle having his peculiar spot allotted him for the promulgation of the gospel of his blessed Master, who had now ascended into heaven, and dispensed his Holy Spirit to qualify his disciples for the important work, visited different parts of the world to preach the gospel, and penetrated as far as the Hither India.

After spending considerable time in India, and the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to the northern and western parts, and we find him at Hierapolis, in Phrygia, laboring in concert with Philip to plant Christianity in those parts; and to convince the blind idolators of the evil of their ways, and direct them in the paths that lead to eternal salvation. This enraged the bigoted magistrates, and he was, together with Philip, designed for martyrdom, and in order to this, fastened to a cross; but their consciences pricking them for a time, they took Bartholomew down from the cross and set him at liberty.

From hence he retired to Lycaonia, and Chrysostom assures us that he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the Christian discipline.

His last remove was to Albanople, in Great Armenia, a place miserably overrun with idolatry, from which he labored to reclaim the people. But his endeavors to "turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God," were so far from having the desired effect that it provoked the magistrates, who

prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, sealing the truth of the doctrine he had preached, with his blood.

ST. MATTHEW.

MATTHEW, called also Levi, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean. His trade was that of a publican or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office detested by the generality of the Jews, on two accounts; first, because having farmed the customs of the Romans, they used every method of oppression to pay their rents to the Romans; secondly, because they demanded tribute of the Jews, who considered themselves as a free people, having received that privilege from God himself. And hence they had a common proverb among them, "Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican, for they are all publicans." That is, they are all thieves, robbers, and notorious sinners. And to this proverbial custom our blessed Saviour alludes, when speaking of a hardened sinner, on whom neither private reproofs, nor the public censures and admonitions of the church, can prevail. "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Our blessed Saviour, having cured a person long afflicted with the palsy, retired out of Capernaum to walk by the sea-side, where he taught the people that flocked after him.

Here he saw Matthew sitting in his office, and called

him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wise and prudent person, and doubtless understood what would be his loss to comply with the call of Jesus. He was not ignorant that he must exchange wealth for poverty, a custom-house for a prison, and rich and powerful masters for a naked and despised Saviour. But he overlooked all those considerations, left all his interest and relations, to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a more spiritual way of life.

After Matthew's election to the apostleship, he continued with the rest till the ascension of his great and beloved Master. But the evangelical writers have recorded nothing particular concerning him during that period.

After our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven, Matthew, for the first eight years at least, preached in different parts of Judea; but afterward he left the country of Palestine to convert the Gentile world. Before his departure he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write the history of the life and actions of the blessed Jesus, and leave it among them as a standing monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his sermons. This he readily complied with.

After his leaving Judea, he travelled into several parts, especially Ethiopia; but the particular places he visited are not known with any certainty.

However, after laboring indefatigably in the vineyard of his Master, he suffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia called Naddabar. But by what kind of death, is not absolutely known, though the general opinion is that he was slain with an halbert.

Matthew was a remarkable instance of the power of religion in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumstances while he continued a stranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall find that the love of the world had possessed his heart. But notwithstanding this, no sooner did Christ call him, than he abandoned without the least scruple or hesitation all his riches.

He was modest in his own opinion, always preferring others to himself; for whereas the other evangelists, in describing the apostles by pairs, constantly place him before Thomas, he modestly places him before himself. The rest of the evangelists are careful to mention the honor of his apostleship, but speak of his former sordid course of life, only under the name of Levi; while he himself sets it down with all the circumstances, under his own proper and common name. A conduct which at once commends the prudence and candor of the apostle, and suggests to us this useful reflection, that the greatest sinners are not excluded from divine grace; nor can any, if penitent, have just reason to despair, when publicans and sinners find mercy at the throne of grace.

ST. THOMAS.

EVANGELICAL history is entirely silent with regard either to the country or kindred of Thomas. It is, however, certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean.

He was, together, like the rest, called to the apostleship; and, not long after gave an eminent instance of his being ready to undergo the most melancholy fate that might attend him. For when the rest of the apostles dissuaded their Master from going into Judea, at the time of Lazarus' death, because the Jews lately endeavored to stone him, Thomas desired them not to hinder his journey thither, though it might cost them all their lives.

When the holy Jesus, a little before his sufferings, had been speaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them that he was going to prepare mansions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going, and the way thither; our apostle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much less the way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this short but satisfactory answer, "I am the way;" I am the person whom the Father has sent into the world to show mankind the path that leads to eternal life, and therefore you cannot miss the way, if you follow my example.

After the disciples had seen their great Master expire on the cross, their minds were distracted by hopes and fears concerning his resurrection, about which they were not then fully satisfied; which engaged him the sooner to hasten his appearance, that by the sensible manifestations of himself, he might put the matter beyond all possibility of dispute.

At the first meeting Thomas was absent, having probably never joined their company since their dispersion in the garden, where every one's fears prompted him to consult his own safety. At his return they told

him that the Lord had appeared to them ; but he obstinately refused to give credit to what they said, or believe that it was really he, presuming it rather a spectre or apparition, unless he might see the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and side.

But our compassionate Saviour would not take the least notice of his perverse obstinacy, but on that day seven-night came again to them, as they were solemnly met at their devotions, and calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the prints of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, to satisfy his faith by a demonstration from the senses. Thomas was convinced of his error and obstinacy, and confessed that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Master, saying, “ My Lord and my God.” Our Lord answered, that it was happy for him that he believed the testimony of his own senses ; but that it would have been more commendable in him to have believed without seeing, because it was foretold that the Son of God should burst the chains of death, and rise again from the dead.

Thomas, as well as the rest, preached the gospel in several parts of Judea ; and after the dispersion of the Christian church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia, the province assigned him for his ministry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the gospel to the Medes, Persians, Caramanians, Hyrcani, Bactartans, and the neighboring nations.* During his preaching in Persia, he is said to have met with the

* There is reason to think the apostle Thomas penetrated China, and planted churches there.

Magi, or wise men, who had taken that long journey at our Saviour's birth to worship him, whom he baptized, and took with him as his companions and assistants in propagating the gospel.

Leaving Persia, he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing their sick, and working other miracles, to prove he had his commission from on high. And after travelling through these countries, he entered India.

When the Portuguese first visited these countries after their discovery of a passage by the Cape of Good Hope, they received the following particulars, partly from constant and uncontroverted traditions preserved by the Christians in those parts; namely, that St. Thomas came first to Socotora, an island in the Arabian sea, and then to Cranganor, where having converted many from the error of their ways, he travelled farther into the east; and having successfully preached the gospel, returned back to the kingdom of Coromandel, where at Mattapour, the metropolis of that kingdom, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a place for divine worship, till prohibited by the idolatrous priests, and Sagamo, prince of that country. But after performing several miracles, the work was suffered to proceed, and Sagamo himself embraced the Christian faith, whose example was soon followed by great numbers of his friends and subjects.

This remarkable success alarmed the Brahmins, who plainly perceived that their religion would soon be extirpated, unless some method could be found of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity; and therefore resolved to put the apostle to death. At a small distance

from the city was a tomb, whither St. Thomas often retired for private devotions. Hither the Brahmins, and their armed followers pursued him, and while he was at prayer, they first shot at him with a shower of darts, after which one of the priests ran him through with a lance. His body was taken up by his disciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected.

Chrysostom says, that Thomas, who at first was the weakest and most incredulous of all the apostles, became, through Christ's condescension to satisfy his scruples, and the power of divine grace, the most active and invincible of them all; travelling over most parts of the world, and living without fear in the midst of barbarous nations, through the efficacy of that almighty power which can make the weakest vessels to perform acts of the greatest difficulty and moment.

ST. JAMES THE LESS.

It has been doubted by some, whether this was the same with that James who was afterward bishop of Jerusalem, two of this name being mentioned in the sacred writings, namely, St. James the Great, and St. James the Less, both apostles. But nothing is plainer than that St. James the apostle (whom St. Paul calls "our Lord's brother," and reckons, with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church) was the same who presided among the apostles, and determined the cause in the council of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to think that he was the

son of Joseph, afterward the husband of Mary, by his first wife, whom St. Jerome styles Escha, and adds, that she was the daughter of Aggi, brother to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Hence he was reputed our Lord's brother.

After the resurrection, he was honored with the particular appearance of our Lord to him, which though passed over in silence by the evangelists, is recorded by St. Paul. 1 Cor. xv. 17.

Some time after he was chosen bishop of Jerusalem. When Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion, he applied to James, and was honored by him with "the right-hand of fellowship." And it was to James that Peter sent the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison. "Go," said he, "show these things unto James and to the brethren;" that is, to the whole church, especially to James the pastor of it.

He performed every part of his duty with all possible care and industry, omitting no particular necessary to be observed by a diligent and faithful guide of souls, strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, reproving the obstinate: and by the constancy of his sermons, conquering the stubbornness of that perverse and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better sort being persuaded to embrace the Christian faith.

But a person so careful, so successful in his charge, could not fail of exciting the spite and malice of his enemies; a sort of men to whom the apostle has given too true a character, that "they please not God, and are contrary to all men." They were vexed to see St. Paul had escaped their hands, by appealing unto Cæsar;

and therefore turned their fury against St. James : but being unable to effect their design under the government of Festus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorship of Albinus his successor, Ananus the younger, of the sect of the Sadducees, being high-priest.

In order to do this a council was summoned, and the apostle, with others, arraigned and condemned as violators of the law. But that the action might appear more plausible and popular, the Scribes and Pharisees, masters in the art of dissimulation, it is said, endeavored to ensnare him.

The apostle being advantageously placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addressed him in the following manner ; “ Tell us, what is the instruction of the crucified Jesus ? ” To which the apostle answered, with an audible voice, “ Why do ye inquire of Jesus the Son of Man ? He sits in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven.” The people below hearing this, glorified Jesus, and openly proclaimed, “ Hosanna to the Son of David.”

The Scribes and Pharisees now perceived that they had acted foolishly. Accordingly they suddenly cried out, That James himself was become an impostor ; and they immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he stood, into the court below ; but not being killed on the spot, he recovered himself so far as to rise on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers. But malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindness, or satisfied with cruelty. Accordingly his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, poured a shower of stones upon him, while

he was imploring their forgiveness at the throne of grace; and one of them, dissatisfied with this cruel treatment, put an end to his misery with a fuller's club.

Thus did this great and good man finish his course, in the ninety-sixth year of his age, and about twenty-eight years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the sober and just persons among the Jews themselves, as Josephus himself confesses.

He was a man of exemplary piety and devotion, educated under the strictest rules and institutions of religion. Prayer was his constant business and delight; he seems as it were to have lived upon it, and continually to have had his conversation in heaven; and he who has told us, "that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much," found it so by his own experience, heaven lending a more immediate ear to his petitions; so that in a time of remarkable drought, on his praying for rain, the clouds melted into fruitful showers.

Nor was his charity toward men less than his piety toward God; he did good to all, watched over the souls of men, and studied to advance their eternal welfare. Of this his Epistle is a living monument.



ST. SIMON, THE ZEALOT.

THIS Simon, in the catalogue of the apostles, is styled "Simon the Cananite," whence some conjecture he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to

have been the bridegroom mentioned by St. John, at whose marriage our blessed Saviour turned the water into wine. But this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word "kana," which signifies "zeal," and denotes a warm and sprightly temper. What some of the evangelists therefore call "Cananite," others, rendering the Hebrew by the Greek word, style "Zealot:" from his warm, active temper, and zealous forwardness in some particular sect of religion before his coming to our Saviour.

In order to understand this the better, it will be necessary to observe, that as there were several sects and parties among the Jews, so there was one, either a distinct sect, or at least a branch of the Pharisees, called the sect of the Zealots. This sect of the Zealots took upon them to execute punishments in extraordinary cases; and that not only by the connivance, but with the permission both of the rulers and people. Josephus gives a large account of them, and everywhere bewails them as the great plague of the nation.

This is a true account of the sect of the Zealots; though, whatever St. Simon was before, we have no reason to suspect but after his conversion he was very zealous for the honor of his Master. He continued in communion with the rest of the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem; and at the Feast of Pentecost received the same miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; so that as he was qualified with the rest of his brethren for the apostolical office, in propagating the gospel of the Son of God. We cannot doubt of his exercising his gifts with the same zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the

world is uncertain. Some say he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of those remote and barbarous countries. And others add, that after he had passed through those burning wastes, he took ship and visited the frozen regions of the north, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of the western parts, and even to Britain: where having converted great multitudes and sustained the greatest hardships and persecutions, he was at last crucified, and buried in some part of Great Britain, but the place where is unknown.

ST. JUDE.

THIS apostle is mentioned by three several names, in the evangelical history, namely, Jude or Judas, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus.

He was brother to James the Less, being the son of Joseph, the reputed father of Christ, by a former wife. It is not known when or by what means he became a disciple of our blessed Saviour, nothing being said of him, till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve apostles; nor afterward, till Christ's last supper, when discoursing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promise, that he would return to them again (meaning after his resurrection), and that the "world should see him no more, though *they* should see him," our apostle said to his Master, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?"

Paulinus tells us that the province which fell to the

share of Jude, in the apostolic division of the provinces, was Lybia; but he does not tell us whether it was the Cyrenian Lybia, which is thought to have received the gospel from St. Mark, or the more southern parts of Africa. But however that be, in his first setting out to preach the gospel, he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria unto Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia and the neighboring countries, and afterward to Syria and Mesopotamia. Nicephorus adds, that he came at last to Edessa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddeus, one of the seventy, had already sown the seeds of the gospel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his sermons and miracles established the religion of Jesus, he died in peace; but others say that he was slain at Berytus, and honorably buried there. The writers of the Latin Church are unanimous in declaring that he travelled into Persia, where, after great success in his apostolical ministry for many years, he was at last, for his freely and openly reproving the superstitious rites and customs of the Magi, cruelly put to death.

St. Jude left only one epistle, which is placed the last of those seven, styled catholic, in the sacred canon. It hath no particular inscription as the other six have, but it is thought to have been primarily intended for the Christian Jews, in their several dispersions, as St. Peter's epistles were. In it he tells them that he at first intended to write to them in general of the common salvation, and establish and confirm them in it; but seeing the doctrine of Christ attacked on every side by heretics (as foretold by Peter, in his second epistle, nearly thirty years before), he conceived it more necessary to

spend his time in exhorting them to fight manfully in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints, and oppose the false teachers who labored so indefatigably to corrupt it.

It was some time before this epistle was generally received in the church. The author, indeed, like St. James, St. John, and sometimes St. Paul himself, does not call himself an apostle, styling himself only "the servant of Christ." But he has added what is equivalent, "Jude, the brother of James," a character that can belong to no one but our apostle. And surely the humility of a follower of Jesus should be no objection against his writings.

ST. MATTHIAS.

AS MATTHIAS was not an apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen of the Son of God himself, it cannot be expected that any account of him can be found in the evangelical history. He was one of our Lord's disciples, probably one of the seventy; he had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, beginning with the baptism of John, and after his death was elected into the apostleship to supply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Master, laid violent hands on himself.

The defection of Judas having made a vacancy in the apostolic college, the first thing they did, after their return from Mount Olivet, when their great Master had ascended to the throne of his glory, was to fill up this vacancy with a proper person.

Accordingly, two persons were proposed, Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias, both duly qualified for the important office. The method of election was by lot, a way common both among the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult cases, especially in choosing judges or magistrates. The prayer being ended, the lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the person, and he was accordingly numbered among the twelve apostles.

St. Matthias spent the first year of his ministry in Judea, where he reaped a very considerable harvest of souls, and then travelled into different parts of the world, to publish the glad tidings of salvation to people who had never before heard of a Saviour; but the particular parts he visited are not certainly known.

It is uncertain by what kind of death he left the regions of mortality, and sealed the truth of the gospel he had so assiduously preached, with his blood. Dorotheus says, he finished his course at Sebastople, and was buried there, near the temple of the sun.* But the Greek offices, supported herein by several ancient breviaries, tell us that he was crucified.

ST MARK.

ST. MARK was descended from Jewish parents, and of the tribe of Levi. The ancients generally considered him as one of the seventy disciples; and Epiphanius

* Sebastoble, (or Sevastopol) on the north side of the Black sea, is a maritime city, made famous in our times by its siege, defence, and final capture by the French and English forces, in the late war with Russia.

expressly tells us, that he was one of those who, taking exception at our Lord's discourse of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood, went back and walked no more with him." But there appears no manner of foundation for these opinions, nor likewise for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the son of St. Peter's sister.

Eusebius tells us, that St. Mark was sent into Egypt by St. Peter to preach the gospel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria, the metropolis of it; and his success was so very remarkable, that he converted multitudes both of men and women; persuading them not only to embrace the Christian religion, but also a life of more than ordinary strictness.

St. Mark did not confine himself to Alexandria and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed westward to Lybia, passing through the countries of Marmacia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where, though the people were both barbarous in their manners, and idolatrous in their worship, yet by his preaching and miracles he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the gospel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith.

After this long tour he returned to Alexandria, where he preached with the greatest freedom, ordered and disposed of the affairs of the church, and wisely provided for a succession, by constituting governors and pastors of it. But the restless enemy of the souls of men would not suffer our apostle to continue in peace and quietness, for while he was assiduously laboring in the vineyard of his Master, the idolatrous inhabitants, about the time of Easter, when they were celebrating the solemnities of Serapis, tumultuously entered the church, forced St.

Mark, then performing divine service, from thence ; and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and over the most craggy places, to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, leaving him there in a lonesome prison, for that night ; but his great and beloved Master appeared to him in a vision, comforting and encouraging his soul, under the ruins of his shattered body. The next morning early the tragedy began afresh, for they dragged him about in the same cruel and barbarous manner, till he expired. But their malice did not end with his death ; they burnt his mangled body after they had so inhumanly deprived it of life : but the Christians, after the horrid tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and ashes, and decently interred them near the place where he used to preach.

His remains were afterward, with great pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they were religiously honored, and he was adopted the tutelar saint and patron of that state.

He suffered martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the year is not absolutely known : the most probable opinion, however, is that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

His gospel, the only writing he left behind him, was written at the entreaty and earnest desire of the converts at Rome, who not content with having heard St. Peter preach, pressed St. Mark, his fellow disciple, to commit to writing an historical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulness and brevity, and being perused and approved of by St. Peter, it was commanded to be publicly read in their assemblies. It was frequently styled St. Peter's gospel,

not because he dictated it to St. Mark, but because the latter composed it in the same manner as St. Peter usually delivered his discourses to the people. The remarkable impartiality he observes in all his relations is plain from hence, that so far from concealing the shameful lapse and denial of Peter, he describes it with more aggravating circumstances than any of the other evangelists.



ST. LUKE.

THIS disciple of the blessed Jesus was born at Antioch, the metropolis of all Syria, a city celebrated by the greatest writers of those times for the pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the riches of its commerce, the wisdom of its senate, and the civility and politeness of its inhabitants. It was eminent for schools of learning, which produced the most renowned masters in the arts and sciences. So that, being born, as it were, in the lap of the muses, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal education. But he was not contented with the learning of his own country : he travelled for improvement into several parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly skilled in physic, which he made his profession.

St. Luke was a Jewish proselyte ; but at what time he became a Christian is uncertain. It is the opinion of some, from the introduction to his gospel, that he had the facts from the reports of others, who were eye-witnesses. They suppose him to have been converted by

St. Paul: and that he learned the history of his gospel from the conversation of that apostle. On the other hand, those who hold that he wrote his gospel, from his own personal inquiries and knowledge, observe, that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an eye-witness of the matters contained in it, because all those matters were transacted before his conversion.*

But however this be, St. Luke became the inseparable companion of St. Paul, in all his travels, and his constant fellow-laborer in the work of the ministry. This endeared him to that apostle, who seems delighted with owning him for his fellow-laborer, and in calling him "the beloved physician," and the "brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches."

St. Luke wrote two books for the use of the church, his gospel and the Acts of the Apostles; both which he dedicated to Theophilus. Many of the ancients suppose this to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all sincere Christians. But others think it was a real person, because the title of "most excellent" is attributed to him; the usual title and form of address in those times to princes and great men.

His gospel contains the principal transactions of our Lord's life; and the particulars omitted by him are in general of less importance than those of the other evangelists.

With regard to the Acts of the Apostles, written by

* How easy was it for Luke, on first hearing the gospel at Antioch, A. D. 35, to visit Jerusalem, and collect all the facts from the apostles, and other eye-witnesses. Mary, our Lord's mother, might furnish most of the early documents used, and all might be selected and stamped by divine inspiration and authority.

St. Luke, the work was, no doubt performed at Rome, about the time of St. Paul's residing there, with which he concludes his history.

It contains the actions, and sometimes the sufferings, of the principal apostles, especially St. Paul, whose activity in the cause of Christ made him bear a great part in the labors of his Master; and St. Luke being his constant attendant, an eye-witness of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his most intimate transactions, was consequently capable of giving a more full and satisfactory account of them.* Among other things he enumerates the great miracles the apostles did in confirmation of their doctrine.

In both these treatises his manner of writing is exact and accurate; his style, noble and elegant, and yet clear and perspicuous, flowing with an easy and natural grace and sweetness, admirably adapted to a historical design. In short, as a historian, he was faithful in his relations, and elegant in his writings; as a minister, careful and diligent for the good of souls; as a Christian, devout and pious; and to crown all the rest, laid down his life in testimony of the gospel he had both preached and published to the world.

* Luke did not join Paul until A. D. 52, at Troas. Acts xvi. 11. Prior to this period, he probably was much engaged in Jerusalem, in preparing his Gospel, and the first part of his history of the Acts of the Apostles. His gospel, we cannot doubt, was published, and copies multiplied for circulation before he went into Macedonia with Paul. This almost self-evident preposition is confirmed by 2 Cor. viii. 22, in spite of the unreasonable doubts of some critics.

BARNABAS.

BARNABAS was at first called Joses, a softer termination generally given by the Greeks to Joseph. His fellow disciples added the name of Barnabas, as significant of some extraordinary property in him. St. Luke interprets it "the son of consolation," from his being ever ready to minister to the afflicted, both by word and action.

He was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and settled in the Isle of Cyprus, where they had purchased an estate, as the Levites might do out of their own country. His parents finding him of a promising genius and disposition, placed him in one of the schools of Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's master; an incident which, in all probability, laid the first foundation for that intimacy that afterward subsisted between these two eminent servants of the blessed Jesus.

The first mention we find of Barnabas in the Holy Scriptures, is the record of that great and worthy service he did the church of Christ, by succoring it with the sale of his patrimony in Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the apostles' feet, to be put into the common stock, and disposed of as they should think fit among the indigent followers of the holy Jesus.

And now also Barnabas became considerable in the ministry of the church; for we find that St. Paul coming to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, because

he had been so grievous a persecutor of it, and might still be suspected of a design to betray it, addressed himself to Barnabas, a leading man among the Christians, and one that had personal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and satisfied them of the sincerity of his conversion, and in what a miraculous manner it was brought about. This recommendation carried so much weight with it, that Paul was not only received into the communion of the apostles, but taken into Peter's house, "and abode with him fifteen days." Gal. i. 18.

Then the agreeable news was brought to Jerusalem, that several of their body who had been driven out of Judea by the persecutions raised about Stephen, had preached at Antioch with such success, that a great number, both of Jews and proselytes, embraced Christianity; and were desirous that some superior man would come down and confirm them. This request was immediately granted, and Barnabas was deputed to settle the new plantation. Being himself "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith," his charitable deeds accompanying his discourses, and his pious life exemplifying his sound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very considerable additions were made to the Christian church. But there being too large a field for one laborer, he went to fetch Saul from Tarsus, who came back with him to Antioch, and assisted him a whole year in establishing that church. Their labors prospered: their assemblies were crowded, and the disciples, who before this were called among themselves, "brethren, believers, elect," and by their

enemies, "Nazarenes and Galileans," were now called "Christians" first at Antioch, A. D. 43.

In the famine the next year, they were deputed by the church at Antioch to convey succor to the poor Christians in Judea. When they had fulfilled their charitable embassy, and stayed some time at Jerusalem to see the good effects of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark, the son of Mary, sister to Barnabas, and at whose house the disciples found both security for their persons, and conveniency for the solemnities of their worship.

After they had returned to Antioch, an express relation was made to the church by the mouth of one of the prophets who ministered there, that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart for an extraordinary work, unto which the Holy Ghost had appointed them. Upon this declaration the church set apart a day for a solemn mission; after devout prayer and fasting, they laid their hands upon them, and designated them to their office; which was to travel over certain countries, and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. From this joint commission to the heathen, Barnabas obtained the name of an apostle.

Paul and Barnabas being thus consecrated "the apostles of the Gentiles," entered upon their province, taking with them John Mark, for their minister or deacon, who assisted them in many ecclesiastical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor.

The first city they visited, after their departure from Antioch, was Seleucia, a city of Syria, adjoining to the sea; from whence they sailed for the island of Cyprus,

the native place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the gospel in the synagogues of the Jews: and from thence travelled to Paphos, the capital of the island, and famous for a temple dedicated to Venus, the tutelar goddess of Cyprus. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable success; Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, being, among others, converted to the Christian faith.

Leaving Cyprus, they crossed the sea to preach in Pamphilia, where John Mark, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jerusalem: either tired with continual travels, or discouraged at the unavoidable dangers and difficulties which experience had sufficiently informed him would constantly attend the preachers of the gospel from hardened Jews and idolatrous Gentiles.

Soon after their arrival at Lystra, in Lycaonia, Paul cured a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, which so astonished the inhabitants, that they believed them to be gods, who had visited the world in the forms of men. Barnabas they treated as Jupiter, their sovereign deity, either because of his age, or the gravity and comeliness of his person; for all the writers of antiquity represent him as a person of venerable aspect, and a majestic presence. But the apostles, with the greatest humility, declared themselves to be but mortals: and the inconstant populace soon satisfied themselves of the truth of what they had asserted; for at the persuasion of their indefatigable persecutors, who followed them thither also, they made an assault upon them, and stoned Paul, till they left him for dead. But.

supported by an invisible power from on high, he soon recovered his spirits and strength, and the apostles immediately departed for Derbe. Soon after their arrival, they again applied themselves to the work of the ministry, and converted many to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

From Derbe they returned back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith; and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." Acts xiv. 22. After a short stay they again visited the churches of Pamphilia, Perga, and Attala, where they took ship, and sailed to Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they first set out. Soon after their arrival, they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and the great success with which their preaching in the Gentile world had been attended.

But they had not long continued in this city, before their assistance was required to compose a difference in the church, occasioned by some of the Jewish converts, who endeavored to persuade the Gentiles that they were bound to observe the law of Moses, and be circumcised as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavored to dissuade the Zealots from pressing such unnecessary observances: but all his endeavors proving ineffectual, he was deputed with St. Paul and others, to the church at Jerusalem, to submit the question, to be determined there in a full assembly. During their stay at Jerusalem, Mark, in all probability, reconciled himself to Barnabas, and returned with him and St. Paul to Antioch, after they had succeeded in their business in Jerusalem,

and obtained a decree that the Gentile converts should not have circumcision and other Mosaic rites imposed upon them.

This determination generally comforted and quieted the minds of the Gentiles, but it did not prevent the bigoted Jews from keeping up a separation from them; and that with so much obstinacy, that when St. Peter, some time after, came to Antioch, he, for fear of offending them, deviated from his former practice and late speech and vote in the council of Jerusalem, by refraining from all kinds of communion with the Gentiles: and Barnabas himself, though so great and good a man, was induced, by the authority of his example, to commit the same error; but, on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more courage, and walked according to the true liberty of the gospel.

Some days after this last occurrence, Paul made a proposal to Barnabas, that they should repeat their late travels among the Gentiles, and see how the churches they had planted increased in their numbers, and improved in the doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the motion; but desired they might take with them his reconciled nephew, John Mark. This Paul absolutely refused, because, in their former voyage, Mark had not shown the constancy of a faithful minister of Christ, but consulted his own ease at a dangerous juncture. Barnabas still insisted on taking him; and the other continuing as resolutely opposed to it, a short debate arose, which terminated in a separation—whereby these two holy men, who had for several years been companions in the ministry, and with united endeavors propagated the Gospel of the Son

of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas, with his kinsman, sailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul, accompanied by Silas, traveled to the churches of Syria and Cilicia.

After this separation from St. Paul, the sacred writings give us no account of Barnabas; nor are the ecclesiastical writers agreed among themselves with regard to the actions of this apostle after his sailing for Cyprus.* This however seems to be certain, that he did not spend the whole remainder of his life in that island, but visited different parts of the world, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles among the Gentiles.

After long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of success in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he suffered martyrdom in the following manner: Certain Jews, coming from Syria and Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the gospel, being highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and, after the most inhuman tortures, stoned him to death. His kinsman, John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave, where it remained till the time of the Emperor Zeno, in the year of Christ 485, when it was discovered, with St. Matthew's Gospel, in Hebrew, written with his own hand, lying on his breast.

* St. Paul, however, refers to him seven years after their separation, as a faithful and self-denying laborer in the gospel. 1 Cor. ix. 6. This passage sufficiently proves that their difference of judgment and division of labor had not divided their hearts

STEPHEN.

BOTH the Scriptures and the ancient writers are silent with regard to the birth, country, and parents of Stephen. Epiphanius is of opinion that he was one of the seventy disciples. But this is very uncertain. Our blessed Saviour appointed his seventy disciples to teach the doctrines and preach the glad tidings of the gospel; but it does not appear that Stephen and the six other first deacons had any particular designation before they were chosen for the service of the tables. And therefore Stephen could not have been one of our Lord's seventy disciples, though he might have often followed him and listened to his discourses.

He was remarkably zealous for the cause of religion, and full of the Holy Ghost—working many wonderful miracles before the people, and pressing them with the greatest earnestness to embrace the doctrine of the gospel.

This highly provoked the Jews; and some of the synagogues of the freedmen of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places, entered into dispute with him. But being unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they suborned false witnesses against him to testify that they heard him blaspheme against Moses and against God. Nor did they stop here. They stirred up the people by their calumnies, so that they dragged him before the council of the nation, or great Sanhedrin. where they produced false witnesses against him—who deposed that they heard him speak against

the temple, and against the law, and affirm that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy that holy place, and abolish the law of Moses. Stephen, supported by his own innocence and an invisible power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midst of this assembly; and his countenance shone like that of an angel. When the high priest asked him what he had to offer against the accusations laid to his charge, he answered in a plain and faithful address to the Jews, which he closed in the following manner :

“Ye stiff-necked; ye uncircumcised in heart and ears; ye do forever resist the Holy Ghost. Ye tread in the paths of your fathers. As they did, so do you still continue to do. Did not your fathers persecute every one of the prophets? Did not they slay them who showed the coming of the Holy One, whom ye yourselves have betrayed and murdered? Ye have received the law by the dispensation of angels, but never kept it.”

At these words they were so highly enraged, that they all gnashed their teeth against him. But Stephen, lifting up his eyes to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of Omnipotence. Upon which he said to the council, “I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” This so greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and stopped their ears, as if they had heard some dreadful blasphemy; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

Stephen, while they were mangling his body with stones, was praying to Omnipotence for their pardon.

“Lord,” said he, “lay not this sin to their charge.” And then calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his spirit, he yielded up his soul.

TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY was a convert and disciple of St. Paul. He was born at Lystra, in Asia Minor. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jewess, whose name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother, Lois.

These particulars are taken notice of, because St. Paul commends their piety and the good education which they had given Timothy. When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, about the year of Christ 51, the brethren gave a very advantageous testimony of Timothy: and the apostle would have him along with him, and he circumcised him at Lystra before he received him into his company. Timothy applied himself to labor with St. Paul in the business of the gospel; and did him many important services, through the whole course of his preaching. It is believed that he received very early the imposition of the apostle's hands; and that in consequence of a particular revelation, or from the Holy Ghost.* St. Paul calls him not only his dearly beloved

* As Timothy was yet a young man when Paul wrote his first epistle to him (1 Tim. iv. 12), and even when he wrote his second (A. D. 67), as appears from 2 Tim. ii. 22, he must have been quite young at his conversion (A. D. 47), probably not over fourteen; and not over eighteen when called into the ministry of the gospel.

son, but also his brother, the companion of his labors, and a man of God. He declared there were none more united with him in heart and mind, than Timothy.

This holy disciple accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Berea; and when the apostle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens, he sent for Timothy to come thither to him; and when he was come and had given him an account of the churches of Macedonia, St. Paul sent him back to Thessalonica, from whence he afterward returned with Silas, and came to St. Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the apostle mentions him, with Silas, at the beginning of the two epistles which he then wrote to the Thessalonians.

Some years after this, St. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia; and gave Timothy orders to call at Corinth, to refresh the minds of the Corinthians, with regard to the truths which he had inculcated on them. Some time after, writing to the same Corinthians, he recommends them to take care of Timothy, and send him back in peace; after which, Timothy returned to St. Paul in Asia, who there staid for him. They went together into Macedonia; and the apostle puts Timothy's name with his own, before the second epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote to them from Macedonia, about the middle of the year of Christ 57. And he sends his salutations to the Romans in the letter which he wrote to them from Corinth the same year.

When St. Paul returned from Rome, in 64, he left Timothy at Ephesus to take care of that church, of which he was not first bishop, as he is recognized by the

council of Chalcedon. St. Paul wrote to him from Macedonia, the first of the two letters which are addressed to him. He recommends him to be more moderate in his austerities, and to drink a little wine because of the weakness of his stomach, and his frequent infirmities. After the apostle came to Rome, in the year 67, being now very near his death, he wrote to him his second letter, which was full of the marks of his kindness and tenderness for this, his dear disciple; and which is justly looked upon as the last will of St. Paul. He desires him to come to Rome to him before winter, and bring with him several things which St. Paul had left at Troas. If Timothy went to Rome, as it is probable he did, he must have been a witness of the martyrdom of this apostle, in the year of Christ 68.

If he did not die before the year 97, we can hardly doubt but that he must be the Angel of the church of Ephesus, to whom John writes in his Revelation: though the reproaches with which he seems to load him for his instability in having left his first love, do not seem to agree to so holy a man as Timothy was.

The greatest part of interpreters think that these reproaches do not so much concern the person of Timothy, as that of members of his church, whose zeal was grown cool. But others are persuaded that they may be applied to Timothy himself, who made ample amends, by the martyrdom which he suffered, for the reproaches mentioned by St. John in this place. It is supposed that Timothy had Onesimus for his successor.

TITUS.

TITUS was a Gentile by religion and birth, but converted by St. Paul, who calls him his son. St. Jerome says that he was St. Paul's interpreter. St. Paul took him with him to Jerusalem, when he went thither in the year 51 of the vulgar era, about deciding the question which was then started, whether the converted Gentiles ought to be made subject to the ceremonies of the law? Some would then have obliged him to circumcise Titus; but neither he nor Titus would consent to it.* Titus was sent by the same apostle to Corinth, upon occasion of some disputes which then divided the church, A. D. 57. He was very well received by the Corinthians, and very much satisfied with their ready compliance: but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby, the disinterestedness of his Master.

From hence he went to St. Paul in Macedonia, and gave him an account of the state of the church at Corinth. A little while after, the apostle desired him to return again to Corinth, to set things in order preparatory to his coming. Titus readily undertook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Titus was left in the Isle of Crete, about the 63d year of Christ, when St. Paul was obliged to quit that island,

* Paul would not consent to the circumcision of Titus because he was a Gentile, and a great principle was involved in it. He afterward circumcised Timothy, because by his mother's side he was a Jew, and no principle was involved but expediency. In both cases he was consistent.

in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him, to desire that as soon as he should have sent Tychicus or Artemus to him for supplying his place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to Nicopolis in Epirus, upon the gulf of Ambracia, where the apostle intended to pass his winter.

The Epistle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. It is not certainly known from what place it was written, nor by whom it was sent.

Titus was deputed to preach the gospel in Dalmatia; and he was still there in the year 67, when the apostle wrote his second epistle to Timothy. He afterward returned into Crete; from which it is said he propagated the gospel into the neighboring islands. He died at the age of 94, and was buried in Crete. The Greeks keep his festival on the 25th of August, and the Latins on the 4th of January.

JOHN MARK.

JOHN MARK, nephew to Barnabas, and a disciple of his, was the son of a Christian woman named Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem where the apostles and the faithful generally used to meet. Here they were at prayers, in the night, when St. Peter, who was delivered out of prison by the angel, came and knocked at the door. And in this house, the celebrated church of Sion was said to have been afterward established.

John Mark (whom some very improperly confound with the Evangelist, St. Mark,) adhered to St. Paul and Barnabas, and followed them in their return to Antioch. He continued in their company and service till they came to Perga, in Pamphylia; but then, seeing that they were undertaking a longer journey, he left them and returned to Jerusalem. This happened in the year 45 or 46 of the common era.

Some years after, that is to say in the year 51, Paul and Barnabas, preparing to return into Asia in order to visit the churches which they had formed there, Barnabas was of opinion that John Mark should accompany them in this journey; but Paul would not consent to it. Upon which occasion these two apostles separated. Paul went to Asia, and Barnabas, with John Mark, to the Isle of Cyprus.

What John Mark did after this journey we do not know, till we find him at Rome, in the year 63, performing signal service for St. Paul during his imprisonment.

The apostle speaks advantageously of him in his Epistle to the Colossians: "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, saluteth you. If he cometh unto you, receive him." He makes mention of him again in his Epistle to Philemon, written in the year 63, at which time he was with St. Paul at Rome; but in the year 67 he was with Timothy in Asia. And St. Paul, writing to Timothy, desires him to bring Marcus to Rome—adding, that he was useful for him in the ministry of the Gospel.*

* It is highly gratifying to find John Mark thus restored to the confidence of the apostle Paul, which he had forfeited by his weakness under the first trials of missionary life. The charitable hopes of Barnabas were thus justified.

In the Greek and Latin churches, the festival of John Mark is kept on the 27th of September. Some say that he was bishop of Biblis, in Phoenicia. The Greeks give him the title of apostle; and say that the sick were cured by his shadow only. It is very probable that he died at Ephesus, where his tomb was very much celebrated and resorted to. He is sometimes called simply John or Mark. The year of his death we are strangers to; and shall not collect all that is said of him in apocryphal and uncertain authors.

CLEMENT.

CLEMENT is mentioned by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, where the apostle says that Clement's name is written in the book of life. The generality of the fathers, and other interpreters, make no question but that this is the same Clement who succeeded Linus and Cletus in the government of the church of Rome; and this seems to be intimated, when in the office of St. Clement's day, that church appoints this part of the epistle to the Philippians to be read.

We find several things relating to Clement's life in the Recognitions and Constitutions called apostolical; but as those works are not looked upon as authentic, though there may be truths in them derived from the tradition of the first ages, little stress is to be laid upon their testimony. St. Chrysostom thinks that Clement, mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians,

was one of the apostle's constant fellow-travellers. Irenæus, Origen, Clemens of Alexandria, and others of the ancients assert, that Clement was a disciple of the apostles; that he had seen them and heard their instructions. Tertullian and Epiphanius say, that St. Peter ordained Clement. Rufinus tell us, that this apostle chose St. Clement for his successor. But Epiphanius believes that after he had been made bishop of Rome by St. Peter, he refused to exercise his office, till, after the death of Linus and Anaclet, he was obliged to take upon himself the care of the church; and this is the most generally received opinion. St. Peter's immediate successor was Linus: Linus was succeeded by Anacletus; and Anacletus by Clement, in the year of Christ 91, which was the tenth of Domitian's reign.*

During his pastorate, the church of Corinth having been disturbed by a spirit of division, St. Clement wrote a large letter to the Corinthians, which is still extant, and was so much esteemed by the ancients, that they read it publicly in many churches; and some have been inclined to range it among the canonical writings. The emperor Domitian intended to declare war against the church of Christ: his design was made known to Hermas, and he ordered to give a copy of it to Clement, that he might communicate it to other churches, and exhort them to provide against the storm. We have no certain account of what happened to St. Clement, during this persecution: but we are very well assured

* These conflicting traditions or conjectures all proceed upon the hypothesis that there was but one bishop in Rome at a time. But as there were many in Ephesus (Acts 20), and several in Philippi (Phil. i. 1), why not several at once in Rome?

that he lived to the third year of Trajan. His festival is set down by Bede, and all the Latin Martyrologies, on the twenty-third of November. The Greeks honor him on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of the same month. Rufinus, and pope Zozimus, give him the title of martyr; and the Roman church, in its canon, places him among the saints who have sacrificed their lives for Jesus Christ.

LIVES OF EMINENT CHRISTIANS AND MARTYRS

FROM THE

First Century to the Reformation.

SIMEON.

IN passing from the first to the second century of the Christian era, the most illustrious martyr of Jewish lineage was Simeon, bishop of the church of Jerusalem. Eusebius informs us (on the authority of Hegesippus), that he was the son of Cleophas, brother of Joseph, and consequently was a cousin of our Lord. His martyrdom fell in the reign of the emperor Trajan, when he was at the extreme age of 120 years. As he immediately succeeded the apostle James, called the Just, his pastorate must have continued about fifty years.*

Born of the family of our Lord, Simeon in his earliest years was a resident of Nazareth in Galilee. Hegesippus says the death of Joseph followed not long after the Passover mentioned in the second chapter of Luke, and if Mary and Jesus, as Neander suggests, made the family of Cleophas their home, Simeon must have been personally intimate with Jesus, and was probably among his early disciples, if not one of the Seventy. With the church in Jerusalem he was therefore identified from

* A bishop, in those times, was only one of a number of elders, on whom devolved the care of a single church. Phil. i. 1.

the beginning, and though not himself an apostle, was eminently an apostolic man. In all the glorious scenes of conversion and the trying seasons of persecution, which followed the day of Pentecost, he bore a part with that mother church of Christendom. He was familiar with its history in all that critical period when true Judaism received its full and final development into Christianity which, by the effulgence of new light from heaven, henceforth shone with surpassing spiritual glory.

The death of the apostle James, A. D. 62, has been formerly related. Four years later, at the outbreak of the Jewish war, which is fully sketched in the appended history of the Jews, when Cestius retreated, an opportunity was afforded for the Christians of Jerusalem to flee from the devoted city, according to the direction of our Lord. Josephus notices the fact that many of the citizens did flee that very night, without specifying that they were Christians. Crossing the Jordan, into the mountain regions under the jurisdiction of King Agrippa, who had taken side with the Romans, the Christians found in the city of Pella a secure refuge through all the bloody war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The church reorganized in Pella, still retained its original name as the church of Jerusalem, and Simeon, at the age of 75, was now its senior pastor. This important office he held till his death. Under him, we learn, it flourished with increasing vigor. "Great numbers of the circumcision," says Eusebius, "came over to the Christian faith at that time, one of whom, Justus, was his successor."

With the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, the

divinely established forms of Judaism having attained their object, perished forever. Christianity, its inner life, now came forth before the world in all its distinctness, freedom, and spiritual beauty; Christ its only High Priest and Sacrifice, and his followers "a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood," having immediate access to God through faith. It was the lot of Simeon to guide the Jewish-Christian church under his care through this period of transition, and his high honor to have done it well.

Three times during his long pastorate, Simeon was exposed to imminent danger from the jealousy entertained by the Roman government of the royal family of David. Under Vespasian first, then Domitian, and finally under Trajan, rumors were spread which led to the arrest and examination of the surviving members of that now poor and depressed family, of which Simeon was one. The last of these jealous trials gave him the martyr's crown as a Christian. According to Hegesippus and Eusebius, the venerable old man, together with his nephews, the surviving sons of the Apostle Jude, was accused before Atticus the Roman governor, during a popular insurrection of the rebellious Jews, by the envy of certain heretics. For three days he was put to the torture, which he bore with a serenity that astonished the judge and his attendants. He was then ordered to be crucified, and thus finished his life and labors in like manner with his Lord.

Hegesippus, the Jewish-Christian historian (A. D. 175), who records his death through the false accusation of heretics, adds this valuable testimony on the state of the Christian church in this early time. "The

church continued until then (A. D. 115) as a pure and uncorrupt virgin; whilst if there were any at all that attempted to pervert the sound doctrine of the saving gospel, they were yet skulking in dark retreats. But when the sacred choir of the apostles became extinct, and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusions of false teachers. These also, as there were none of the apostles left, henceforth attempted, without shame, to preach their false doctrine against the doctrine of truth."

Let us bless God that though the apostles are dead, we have the writings of the apostles as a light to guide the church forever. (2 Pet. i. 14-21.)



IGNATIUS.

IGNATIUS, bishop of Antioch in Syria from A. D. 75, surnamed Theophorus for his eminent piety, suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Trajan. From his "Acts" and "Epistles," published by Archbishop Usher in 1647, we learn the circumstances, as well as the character and spirit of this eminent man. The Acts were written by the eye-witnesses of his sufferings. They represent him as a man in all things like the apostles. "By the constancy of his doctrine and spiritual labors, he opposed himself to the floods of the adversary. He was like a divine lamp, illuminating the hearts of the faithful by his exposition of the holy Scriptures." To preserve his church, he scrupled not to expose himself to the bitter

death. The church at Antioch, let it be remembered, was the mother church of the Gentile Christians, as Jerusalem was of the Jewish; and from the first had been distinguished for its numbers, liberality, culture, and missionary zeal.

The policy of Trajan toward the Christians, we learn from his celebrated letter to Pliny the younger, whom he had appointed governor of Bithynia and Pontus, A. D. 103. He forbids search to be made for them or anonymous letters against them to be regarded; but if when publicly accused, they will not deny Christ, he commands them to be put to death. Strange mixture of humanity with the highest injustice and cruelty.

As a general rule the early Christians did not approve of those who, uncalled, offered themselves as martyrs. But when Trajan came to Antioch A. D. 115, on his way to the Parthian war, Ignatius, trembling for the safety of his numerous flock, and hoping to avert the storm from them by the sacrifice of his own life, voluntarily presented himself before him. On learning who he was, the emperor, perhaps irritated by his apparent audacity, said to him: "What an impious spirit art thou, both to transgress our command, and to inveigle others, into the same folly to their ruin!"

Ignatius. "Theophorus ought not to be called impious; forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed from the servants of God.

Trajan. "Pray, who is Theophorus."

Ignatius. "He who has Christ in his breast."

Trajan. "And thinkest thou not that gods reside in us also, who fight for us against our enemies?"

Ignatius. "You mistake in calling the demons of the

nations by the name of God. For there is only one God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom be my portion."

Trajan. "His kingdom, do you say, who was crucified under Pilate?"

Ignatius. "HIS, who crucified my sin with its author; and has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of those who carry him in their heart."

Trajan. "Dost thou then carry him who was crucified within thee?"

Ignatius. "I do, for it is written, I will dwell in them and walk in them."

Then Trajan pronounced this sentence: "Since Ignatius confesses that he carries within himself him that was crucified, we command that he be carried bound by soldiers to great Rome, there to be thrown to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the people." Such was the sentence of an emperor, whom the Romans for ages called Optimus, the Best!

Ignatius was now taken down to Seleucia, the port of Antioch, and put on board a ship sailing for Smyrna. Here he had the opportunity of seeing his friend Polycarp, the youthful pastor of that church, and also deputies from the other churches in that region. Here also he wrote two of his three genuine epistles, namely those to Ephesus and Rome.*

Nothing lies more on his heart in his epistles, than to recommend to the churches the most perfect unity and concord. He represents Christians as all united in Jesus

* Cureton, Rawlinson and Bunsen allow only this number, and no more are found in the Syriac.

Christ; all partaking of the same spiritual life. He urges them to preserve their faith and order, to reject heresies, and watch against all dissension and division. He adds, "Yet pray earnestly for other men without ceasing: for there is hope of conversion in them, that they also may be brought to God. Give them an opportunity to be instructed, at least by your works. Without Christ thinking nothing:—in him I carry about my bonds—spiritual jewels; in whom may I be found in the resurrection. Remember me, as Jesus Christ also does you."

The desire of martyrdom in this venerable man appears to us excessive. His enthusiasm is morally sublime, as may be seen in his letter to the Christians of Rome, in which he begs them to do nothing to procure his release. In view of his approaching death he exultingly exclaims, "Now I begin to be a disciple; nor shall any thing move me of things visible or invisible:—let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil come upon me; be it so, only may I enjoy Jesus Christ. It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ than to reign over the ends of the earth. Him I seek who died for us. Him I desire who rose again for us. My worldly affections are crucified; the fire of God's love burns within me, and cannot be extinguished; it lives, it speaks, and says, Come to the Father."

From Smyrna, the self-devoted martyr was hurried, as soon as the wind would allow, to Troas, (whence he wrote to Polycarp,) and thence to Neapolis, and through Macedonia and Epirus, to Rome, to be in season for the

annual public spectacles in the amphitheatre. He there had his wish—the wild beasts were his sepulchre. A few bones only were left, which were collected by his deacons and carried back to Antioch.

POLYCARP.

THE sixth year of the emperor Marcus Aurelius was marked by the martyrdom of the aged and illustrious Polycarp, who for more than seventy years had been a bishop of the church in Smyrna. According to Irenæus, he had been educated under the last of the apostles, and ordained by them to the pastoral office in that city. Usher hence concludes that this was before the date of the Apocalypse, A.D. 95, and that he was the “angel of the church” there addressed. He has been mentioned already as the friend of Ignatius, who addressed to him one of his three epistles. His own epistle to the Philippians is still extant, and gives a very pleasing view of his mind and character. The pagans themselves bore unwilling testimony to his lifelong influence when they denounced him as “the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the destroyer of our gods.”

Eusebius tells us of a visit made by this apostolic man to Anicetas, bishop of Rome, about A.D., 150, to quiet a controversy then agitated on the observance of Easter. Though failing to effect an agreement of opinion, on a point purely traditional, they agreed to differ amicably.

But the visit was of great importance in reclaiming many from the errors of the Docetæ, then propagated in

that city by Marcion. The heresiarch, unable to resist the weight of Polycarp's testimony to the true apostolic doctrine, claimed falsely to be of the same belief with him, and meeting him publicly on one occasion said, "Polycarp, own us," to which the indignant old man replied, "I own you as the first-born of Satan," *i. e.* as an Antichrist. This is precisely in the spirit of his teacher, the apostle John, in his first and second epistles, in respect to such deceitful workers.

From a letter addressed by the church of Smyrna to her sister churches generally, quoted at length by Eusebius, we learn the particulars of the persecution in which he, with many others of less note, suffered unto death.

He had not designed to leave the city for safety, but yielded to the urgent entreaties of his flock, and retired to a farm-house not far distant. Here he was tracked by his pursuers. Convinced that his time was come—of which he had been forewarned in a dream and had forewarned his friends—he delivered himself up with gentle dignity, ordering for them a bountiful meal, while he devoted an hour to fervent prayer.

When brought before the proconsul, that high official, who had just before succeeded in persuading one Quintus to swear by the gods and sacrifice his salvation to his fears, attempted the same thing with Polycarp. Over and over again he urged him. "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar—swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ." Polycarp (then about a hundred years old) replied:

"Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never wronged me; and how can I blaspheme my King

who hath saved me?—I am a Christian; and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and hear.”

“I have wild beasts,” said the proconsul; “I will expose you to them unless you repent.”

“Call them,” replied the martyr. “Our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worse; but it is a good thing to be changed from evil to good.”

Proconsul. “I will tame your spirit by fire, unless you repent.”

Polycarp. “You threaten me with fire which burns for a moment; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you please.”

The proconsul was visibly embarrassed. The people demanded that Polycarp should be given to the lions, but as the Asiarch pronounced the time for the opening of the amphitheatre past, he was ordered to be burnt alive.

As they were about to fasten him to the stake, he said: “Let me remain as I am; for he who gives me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me to remain unmoved. Placing his hands behind him, the heroic man then offered a prayer, closing with these words: “O God, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost; among whom may I be received before thee this day, as a sacrifice acceptable. Wherefore I praise thee for all things. I bless thee, I

glorify thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son: through whom, with him, in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee, both now and forever. Amen."

The fire was then lighted, but the rising wind swept the flame away from his body in so wonderful a manner, that he was finally despatched by the thrust of the executioner's sword. His brethren applied to the authorities for his body, but the Jews opposed its delivery to them, saying that "leaving the Crucified One, they would worship him:" on which the letter of the church of Smyrna remarks: "It is not possible for us to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all who are saved of the human race, nor ever to worship any other. For we adore him as being the Son of God; but we justly love the martyrs as disciples of the Lord." Had these just views continued to prevail in after ages, we should have heard nothing of invocation of the Saints and of the Virgin Mary.

The centurion, to avoid a tumult, finally burnt the body. The few bones remaining, "more precious than gold and jewels" to his affectionate church, were gathered and buried, and the day of his martyrdom was annually commemorated by them as his birthday to a better life. It is to be regretted that a custom at first so pure and innocent, was after the lapse of two centuries perverted into gross superstition.

JUSTIN MARTYR.

THIS distinguished Christian philosopher, writer, and martyr, was born at Neapolis, the ancient Schechem or Sichem, in Samaria, near the beginning of the second century of our era. His father was a Gentile.

Justin in his youth travelled for the improvement of his understanding, and in Alexandria sought from the philosophic schools the knowledge of God for which he thirsted. He began with the Stoics, and not finding satisfaction, tried in succession the Peripatetics, the Pythagorians, and the Platonists. Fascinated for a time with the latter, he gave himself up to study and retirement. But God had better things in store for him.

One day, as he was walking by the sea-shore, he met a venerable stranger, whose countenance arrested his attention. He says: "We soon entered into conversation, and upon my professing a love for private meditation, the venerable old man hinted at the absurdity of mere speculation, abstracted from practice. This gave occasion for me to express my ardent desire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The stranger by degrees endeavored to cure me of my ignorant admiration of Plato and Pythagoras; he pointed out the writings of the Hebrew prophets as much more ancient than any of those called philosophers, and he led me to some view of the nature and evidences of Christianity; adding, 'Above all things pray that the gates of light may be opened to you, for

they are not discernible, nor to be understood, except God and his Christ cause a man to understand.' I saw him no more, but immediately a fire was kindled in my soul, and I had a strong affection for the prophets and for those men who are the friends of Christ. I weighed within myself the arguments of the aged stranger, and in the end I found the divine Scriptures to be the only sure philosophy."

His conversion took place early in the reign of Adrian, and his subsequent life proves that it was the deep, vital work of the Holy Spirit, which abideth forever. He owns however that he was greatly confirmed in his faith by the example of suffering Christians.

He still continued to wear the philosopher's garb to which he was accustomed, partly from taste and habit, and partly because it gave him access to that class of men to whose conversion he mainly devoted himself.

His pen was consecrated to the cause of truth. He defended the gospel against the philosophizing heretics of his times, and wrote an Address and an Exhortation to the Gentiles—the first philosophic defence of Christianity that has come down to our times.

He wrote two Apologies for the Christians, which he presented to the emperor and senate of Rome, under Adrian, Pius Antoninus, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus. These are extremely valuable for their facts and expositions, showing what Christianity is, and how unjust were the laws which made the mere profession of it by thousands of the purest men and women a capital crime against the State.

Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, is regarded by Dr. Adam Clarke as the most valuable of his works.

It is divided into three parts : in the first, he refutes the erroneous notions of the Jews about the law : in the second, he shows the divine nature of Christ, and proves that he was incarnate for our salvation ; in the third he shows how the calling of the Gentiles was prefigured in the law, and foretold by the prophets.

About the year 163, Justin was accused as a Christian by the philosopher Crescene, a vile and malignant man, who took offence at his teachings. He was arrested and brought before Rusticus, the prefect of Rome, who had been the tutor of Marcus Aurelius. Before him he made a noble profession of his faith, and was condemned to be first scourged and then beheaded, to which he joyfully submitted, in the certain hope of everlasting life.

IRENÆUS.

THIS eminent writer and martyr, for many years pastor of the church in Lyons, Gaul, was of Greek origin, and forms the connecting link between Asia Minor and Western Europe. His Christian instructors were Papias, of Hierapolis, and Polycarp, of Smyrna. The latter made the deepest impressions upon him in his early years, as appears from his letter to Florinus, which he wrote late in life, and is a beautiful testimony to his renowned teacher, as well as to the primitive truths of Christianity. We shall quote it hereafter.

The church in Lyons was a colony from the church in Smyrna ; and Pothinus, its first pastor, was from thence. Irenæus assisted this venerable man, and on

his martyrdom, in 169, was chosen his successor. The post was no sinecure. Seldom has a pastor been tried more severely, by persecutions without, and heresies within the church. Irenæus seems to have been endowed with the very qualities of mind required for the occasion. His magnanimity, discrimination, prudence, and fidelity, appear in all that we know of him. As his name imports, he was a man of peace; and when Victor, Bishop of Rome, in 196, haughtily pronounced his excommunication on all the churches of Asia Minor, solely because they differed from him in the insignificant Easter controversy, he did not hesitate to rebuke him as the arbitrary disturber of the liberty and peace of Christendom. We may here remark, that this act of Victor is the first instance in ecclesiastical history of the usurpation of power over other churches by the Church of Rome, and that it then was met by universal and indignant denial, as it deserved to be. A century before, Clement of Rome, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, set up no such claim of jurisdiction, and breathed an entirely different spirit.

The labors of Irenæus in Gaul were of the most evangelical and enduring character. Though a Greek scholar, writing, if not regularly preaching to his flock in that language, he diligently acquired the Celtic language of the country, in order to reach and convert the natives.

His book on Heresies, is almost all of his writings that has escaped the ravages of time. In this he analyzes and dissects all the fanciful schemes of corrupt doctrine, then propagated under the Christian name, usually pointing out their unscriptural origin and their

evil tendency. He writes in a grave and discriminating, as well as pious spirit, which shows how well he was qualified for writing on more experimental and practical topics.

His early acquaintance with apostolic men, like Papias and Polycarp, enabled him to make a very proper appeal to the living tradition of the apostolic churches against the novel theories of the heretics. The argument was then pertinent and valid, as confirmatory of the evidence of the Scriptures, which the heretics of that age attempted by forgeries and interpolations to set aside. This argument has been wretchedly abused in modern times, particularly by the Church of Rome. And in a country like ours, where all have the Scriptures in their own tongue, and are able to search them, it must be less conclusive, even if not dangerous to the real lovers of divine truth. As every one must give account of himself to God, we owe it to him, and to our own souls, like the noble Jews of Berea, to search the Scriptures daily, and see whether the things taught us are really so. The disposition to do this, prayerfully and earnestly, proves that we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Bible, and not tradition, is now, as in the time of the Saviour, the test of truth.

The following extract from the letter of Irenæus, late in life, to the heretic Florinus, gives a beautiful life-like picture of his youth. "I saw you, when I was very young, in the Lower Asia, with Polycarp. For I better remember the affairs of that time, than those that have lately happened—the things which we learn in our childhood growing up in the soul and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch, that I can tell the place in

which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and his discourses to the people; and how he related his conversation with John and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrines, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life: all of which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures. These things I then, through the mercy of God toward me, diligently heard and attended to, recording them, not on paper, but upon my heart."

A man who could say all this, makes a legitimate application when he says to Florinus, in reference to his errors, "These doctrines, those who were presbyters before us—*those who had walked with the Apostles*—did not deliver to you." Indeed, few writers of antiquity are more clear and decided on the fall of man, and his recovery by an incarnate Saviour, than Irenæus.

This excellent man suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Severus. Of the manner, all we learn is, that "after several torments, he was put to death, and, together with him, almost all the Christians in that populous city—so that the streets of Lyons flowed with Christian blood." (A. D. 205.)

THEOPHILUS.

THEOPHILUS, bishop of Antioch, in Syria, from A. D. 167 to 181, was a man of the most extensive Greek learning and culture. He wrote a work of much reputation on the Christian religion, in three books, addressed to Autolycus, a heathen, who had exultingly challenged him, saying, "Show me thy God." Theophilus, who had been a learned heathen himself before his conversion, in this work takes up the challenge.

His style is pleasing, and in the first book highly ornamented. He here shows that God cannot be seen but by the eyes of the understanding, purified from sin; that he cannot be represented by any corporeal image, because his perfections infinitely surpass our conceptions; yet may be known by his works and providence; and he will be seen when men are delivered from mortality and corruption. He then argues in support of the resurrection; proves the reasonableness of believing it; shows that in many arts and sciences which concern the support and comfort of life, nothing is brought to an issue without faith, and that nature is full of striking analogies; and closes the book by illustrating the various names, and titles, and relations by which God has made himself known to Christians. The second book enters into a fuller exposition of Christianity; and the third shows its immense superiority in every respect to Paganism, in antiquity, theology, morality, and happiness.

Theophilus is said to be the first author who employs

the word Trinity, in defining the divine nature as revealed. Dr. Adam Clarke thinks it noteworthy that in the same city (Antioch) where the disciples were first called Christians, the sacred persons in the Godhead were first called the Trinity.

ATHENAGORAS.

THIS learned Christian flourished during the reigns of Adrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus, — that is, from A.D. 117 to 180,—and long before Pantænus was president of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, where so many eminent men were educated. This last fact gives him an important place in history.

His conversion was remarkable. Philip Sidetes, a writer of the fourth century, says that Athenagoras was originally a heathen philosopher (probably of Athens), who, designing to write against the Christians, thought it necessary to read their Scriptures to make his work the more complete. The result was very different from the design; for by examining the Scriptures he was converted to the Christian faith, and, like Paul, applied his noble faculties to defend and diffuse the precious truth he had sought in his ignorance and prejudice to destroy.

Two of his works yet remain—his Legation, or Apology for the Christians, and his treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead; both works of great merit for the thoroughness of the discussions. In the former, which is addressed to Marcus Aurelius and his son

Commodus, he justly complains, that "while all the nations subject to the Empire were permitted freely to worship the gods of their choice, and the most absurd superstitions were tolerated, the Christians alone, whose worship was simple, pure, and worthy of the Deity, were not only denied the liberty granted to all the rest, but were also unjustly maligned, slandered, and persecuted, while the whole of their accusation was their name."

"If we are convicted of any crime, less or more, let us be punished; but not merely for the name of a Christian—for no Christian can be a bad man unless he acts contrary to his profession.

"There is an infamous report that we are guilty of three great crimes, viz: impiety against the gods, feeding on murdered infants, and incestuous copulation. If these be true, spare neither age nor sex; punish us, with our wives and children; exterminate us out of the world. But, if these be false and scandalous calumnies against us, notice them as such. Inquire into our lives, into our opinions, into our obedience to authority, our concern for your person and government; allow us only that common justice and equity you grant your enemies, and we ask no more, being assured of the victory, and ready to lay down our lives for the truth.

"Among us, the meanest day laborers, and old women, though not able to dispute about their profession, yet can demonstrate its usefulness in their lives and good works. Being buffeted, they strike not again; nor sue those at law who spoil and plunder them; they give liberally to those that ask, and love their neighbor as themselves. Thus we do, because we are assured there

is a God who superintends human affairs, who made both us and the whole world, and to whom we must at last give account."

In his book on the Resurrection, he says, "Those who deny the resurrection of the dead, should prove, either that God cannot effect it, or that he will not. If he cannot, it must be because he lacks skill or power; but his formation of the human body refutes this supposition. If he have the power, but will not do it, then it must be because it would be unjust in itself, or unworthy of the divine nature. But neither of these can ever be proved." He argues for the identity of the risen body, on three grounds—the object of man's creation; the nature of man as an accountable being; and from the justice of God, as the rewarder of good and evil.



PANTÆNUS.

ACCORDING to the best accounts, Pantænus, who filled for so many years the office of Catechist or President in the Alexandrian school, was a Jew by descent, but a native of Sicily. He was trained at Athens in the logic of Aristotle, and in the philosophy of the Stoics. The time and manner of his conversion are not recorded, but it was probably under Athenagoras, at Athens or Alexandria, and the reality and power of this great spiritual change was demonstrated by its effects.

"There were even yet," says Eusebius, referring to this period (A.D. 140–170), "many evangelists of the

word, who were ardently striving to employ their inspired zeal after the apostolic example, to increase and build up the divine word; of these Pantænus is said to have been one." He went forth as a herald of the Gospel to the nations of the east, travelling as far as India. Even there he found that he had been preceded by the Apostle Bartholomew, who had left among his Jewish converts there a copy of the Gospel of Matthew, written in the Hebrew of that age, (the Aramæan.)

On his return from his mission, he was settled at Alexandria, as the successor of Athenagoras, though he is often called the first President. Eusebius tells us the school of the faithful had even then been established from ancient times. His great learning and prominent abilities raised his reputation very high. Clement of Alexandria, who had studied under many teachers in the east and west, became his pupil, despairing, he says, of ever finding his superior in abilities and in his knowledge of the Scriptures. He there continued until his death (A.D. 190), as Eusebius says, "commenting on the treasures of divine truth both orally and by his writings." His writings are lost, but his influence long lived in the character of his great pupils.

CLEMENT, OF ALEXANDRIA.

THIS eminent teacher and presbyter, of Alexandria, was at first a heathen philosopher, but on his conversion he became a pupil of Pantænus, whom he succeeded in the Christian Catechetical School, or theological sem-

inary, of that city. Pantænus, who had succeeded Athenagoras, after a presidency of ten years, had rested from his labors. Clement carried on the school for twelve years. But in the persecution of Septimus Severus, he was compelled to flee and visited Jerusalem and Antioch (A.D 203).

Clement, in this visit, found Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, in prison for the faith. He was delighted to form the acquaintance of this holy man, and carried with him, when he went to Antioch, a letter from Alexander to the Antioch church: which breathes a primitive spirit. "Alexander, a servant of God, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ, to the blessed church in Antioch, in the Lord, greeting:—Our Lord has made my bonds, in this time of my imprisonment, light and easy to me, while I understood that Aschpiades, a person admirably qualified, by his eminence in the faith, was by divine providence become bishop of your holy church of Antioch. These letters, brethren, I have sent you by Clement, the blessed presbyter, a man of approved integrity, whom ye both do know already, and shall still further know. He hath been here with us, according to the good will of God, and hath much established and augmented the church of Christ." After visiting Antioch for a session, Clement returned to his labors in Alexandria.

This famous school was then, perhaps, in the height of its glory. Origen, and others, who illustrated the next age by their learned writings and prodigious labors, were then training there, and such pupils reflect honor on their teachers. Yet it may be justly questioned whether, at this very time, the seeds of immense

evil were not sown there, in the culture of philosophical systems, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

How far Clement himself is responsible for these evils we cannot tell. He was himself an eclectic philosopher, or, to use his own words: "I espouse neither this nor that philosophy—neither the Stoic, nor the Platonic, nor the Epicurean, nor that of Aristotle; but whatever any of these sects has said that is fit and just; whatever teaches righteousness, with a divine and religious knowledge; all this I select, and call it philosophy." This certainly seems wise and liberal, and worthy of a good man, as Clement undoubtedly was. But what would be the effect upon his pupils, in a city like Alexandria, which prided itself upon its vast library, its learning, its liberal culture, and its philosophizing spirit? Would it not seem, to the ardent Christian young men, as if Pagan philosophy, in all its forms, was to be studied, for the attainment of true wisdom, rather than the Scriptures? And would they not, though undesignedly, be led away from the only true source of that wisdom which is unto salvation? And would there not be danger that the Scriptures themselves would be interpreted according to the philosophers, than the philosophers tested by the touchstone of God's word? This danger was real, as the baleful results in the next century, and even for ages afterwards, sufficiently showed.

"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? The world by wisdom, knew not God. Beware of vain and deceitful philosophy, and opposition of science, falsely

so called." The Christian world of this period, was fast forgetting these apostolic cautions, and drifting away into a darkness that might be felt.

But nothing could be farther from the intention of Clement. Here was his theory of instruction in his own words: "As the husbandman first waters the soil, and then casts in his seed, so the notions which I derive out of the writings of the Gentiles, serve first to water and soften the earthy parts of the soul, that the spiritual seed may be the better cast in, and take vital root in the minds of men." This, certainly, is not the theory of the Apostles of Christ. They did not put Gentile philosophy at the foundation, nor believe that it would assist at all in rearing the heavenly structure of Christianity. The philosophic religion of their times, they looked upon as so much rubbish to be cleared away; and they asserted, with emphasis, the great axiom of the Gospel: "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, Jesus Christ."

Clement had travelled extensively in his youth, and his knowledge of Greek literature was great, yet he wrote but little. Only three or four of his books have come down to us. His *Cohortation to the Greeks*, his *Pedagogue*, his *Stromata*, or *Miscellanies*, are the principal. His crowning work, the *Hypotypus*, has lately come to light.

Our space allows us only to notice the *Pedagogue*, which with much of allegory, and some pedantry, is allowed by all to be a collection of simple and sublime sentiments. It is not a treatise on the education of youth, as might be supposed from its name; but it discusses the moral discipline of Christians, men and

women, who have become sincere disciples of Christ, the Divine Teacher. Clement says he gives it this name, not because Christianity is a puerile science; on the contrary, it is a science of the most exalted wisdom. His position is, that all the disciples of the truth are children, in regard to God; and this he establishes by the Scriptures. All Christians are "little children," simple, sincere, modest, ingenuous, and free from guile. The Pedagogue who teaches these babes, is Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Clement is careful here to make an admirable distinction. Infancy in Christ, he says, ought to be considered comparatively; it is manhood, in comparison with Judaism; perfect manhood, in comparison with Paganism, in its highest philosophical attainments. The most perfect Christian is, however, but a babe, compared with an apostle, as the most enlightened apostle is but a babe compared with Christ.

The Alexandrian school was set up at first for such babes as Clement has here described; but it degenerated into a school of monkish superstition and pride. The bare foot and the shaven crown, the abstemious diet and the nerveless sapience of contemplative indolence, detachment from the world, and a superstitious confidence in symbols, particularly a cross, had always distinguished the Egyptian priests, and in time they were the badges of Christian pupils!

TERTULLIAN.

CARTHAGE, in Northern Africa, once the seat of the Carthaginian greatness, now for four centuries reduced to a Roman province, gave birth to the first of the Latin writers of the Church, Q. S. F. Tertullianus. He was born about A.D. 160. His father was a Roman centurion, who brought him up in heathenism, and while yet a heathen he devoted his masculine faculties to the study of rhetoric and law. Jerome implies, if he does not affirm, that he went to Rome to perfect himself in these studies, and had become already famous as a jurisconsult, before his conversion to Christianity. But if this were so, he must have afterwards returned to Carthage, as all his writings indicate that African city as his residence. He therefore properly represents the Christianity of that region, and through him for the first time we gain any knowledge concerning its condition and progress there.

The time and means of his conversion are not distinctly recorded, but it is certain that his heart was profoundly affected and pervaded by the power of divine grace. Christianity became, as Neander observes, "the inspiring soul of his life and thought." Out of Christianity an entirely new and rich inner world developed itself to his mind; but the holy leaven had first to penetrate through and completely refine that fiery, bold, and withal rugged nature. We find new wine in an old bottle; and the tang which it contracted there accounts for some of the inconsistencies in his life and writings.

The civilization of his times proceeded from the difference between the two great individualities of national character—the Greek and the Roman. In the Greek predominated the activity of the intellect—the scientific, speculative element. The Roman character was less mobile, as in its spirit, the practical church interest was so absorbing as to leave no room for the scientific; the west was in want of an organ whereby the spirit that prevailed there could scientifically express itself. Such an organ was supplied by the church of North Africa in Tertullian—a man who united in himself the elements of the Roman and the Carthaginian character. Wanting the chaste sobriety of mind for which Irenæus was distinguished, though a foe to speculation, he could not resist the impulses of a profoundly speculative intellect; and to the devout practically Christian element, he united a speculative one—destitute however of the regular form—which continued for a long time to operate through intermediate agencies in the western church, until it finally impregnated the mind of that great teacher of centuries, Augustine, in whom Tertullian once more appears under a transfigured form.

Either at Rome or at Carthage he had been ordained one of the elders of the church; all that we know is that for many years he exercised that office at Carthage, and a large part of his works were written while connected with the regular church in that city.

But a great impression was made upon his peculiar temperament by the appearance of Montanism, with its claims to a more spiritual and elevated piety, and for a time at least he so far embraced them as to withdraw

himself from the church and even wrote in defence of Montanism.

As this forms an essential part of his history so it was by him that the principles which lie at the basis of Montanism were systematically determined, and thereby made to have an influence on the theology of the west.

Among the many ideas of this sect was this one :—that there were certain seasons or epochs of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, through which the progressive development of the church was to be promoted ; a new momentum superadded to its ordinary course of development, and designed to complete what was lacking in it. In receiving this principle, and looking round for arguments to support it, Tertullian endeavored to show the necessity of some such progressive development of the church, by pointing to a law running through all the works of God, in the kingdoms of nature and of grace.

“In the works of grace,” said he, “as in the works of nature, which proceed from the same Creator, every thing unfolds itself by certain successive steps. From the seed kernel shoots forth, first, the plant ; then comes the blossom—and finally, this becomes the fruit, which itself arrives at maturity only by degrees. So, the kingdom of righteousness unfolds itself by certain stages. In the first place, there was the fear of God awakened by the voice of nature, without a revealed law (the patriarchal religion) ; next followed the stage of childhood under the law and the prophets ; then that of youth under the gospel ; and then the unfolding of the spiritual life to the ripeness of manhood, through the new outpouring of the Holy Spirit connected with

the appearance of Montanus, through the new instructions of the promised Paraclete."

This great man is said, by some, to have returned to the church he had forsaken ; others say that he left the Montanists, and founded a separate community called Tertullianists, and a sect of that name existed two centuries later in the time of Augustine. As he retained firmly his attachment to orthodox doctrine in the main, he may have sought to combine, in a new organization, the best elements of both, without their attendant evils. He lived to a great age, but the year of his death is not known.

The writings of Tertullian are too numerous to be enumerated here. They run through the widest range of topics relating to Christian doctrine and life ; and with all the defects justly imputed to them by Milner and others, contain, as Dr. A. Clarke observes, more information, in more energetic language, than most, or perhaps any of the fathers. His words are diamonds, and diamonds of the first water, with no more polish than is sufficient to show their excellent quality, and how capable they were of receiving additional splendor.

One specimen, taken from his Apology for the Christians, shall suffice to illustrate their numbers, spirit, and manners in his time, and also the style of the author.

"We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, courts, palaces, senates, forum ; *we leave you only your temples.*

"If we were disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain.

But, God forbid that his people should vindicate themselves by human fire, or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is proved.

“We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope. We meet in our assemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourse to the Divine Oracles, for caution, and recollection, on all occasions. We nourish our faith by the Word of God, we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we strengthen our discipline, by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, and by excommunication when it is needful. This last, as being in the sight of God, is of great weight; and is a serious warning of the future judgment. Those who preside, among us, are elderly persons, not distinguished by opulence, but worthiness of character. Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination, for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence, we relieve and bury the needy, support orphans and decrepid persons, those who have suffered shipwreck, are condemned to the mines, or imprisoned. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some. ‘See,’ say they, ‘how they love one another.’

“We are dead to all ideas of worldly honor and dignity; nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns; the whole world is our republic. We pray for the safety of the emperors, to the eternal God—the true, the living God—whom emperors themselves would desire to be propitious to them, above all other that are called gods. . . . Let the claws of wild beasts pierce us, or their feet trample on us, while our hands

are stretched out to God; let crosses suspend us, let fires consume us, let swords pierce our breasts,—a praying Christian is in a frame for enduring any thing.”

HIPPOLYTUS.

THIS distinguished writer and martyr, was bishop of Portus, the port of Rome, which from the time of Trajan, had taken the place of ancient Ostia. From his position there, he held a seat in the Roman presbytery, or council of the bishop of Rome. He was a theological pupil of Irenæus, of Lyons, and had much of the spirit of his teacher, with a much wider range of learning and literary activity.

From the time of Clement of Rome, for a whole century, that great metropolis of the world had produced but one solitary Christian author, if we except Justin Martyr, who was simply a resident there. That solitary exception was Hermas (brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, before Anicetus, A.D. 150), and he was a layman, and wrote but a single small book of ethical allegory, called “The Shepherd,” which had more influence in the eastern churches than at home. But in the beginning of the third century, Hippolytus arose with a power and splendor far exceeding Caius, the Roman presbyter, and rivalling his other two great contemporaries, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.

The Roman Christians dealt little in speculation. Their bent was practical. They turned their attention mainly to the existing state and government of the

Christian commonwealth, of which the metropolis was the natural centre. To give advice to the brethren in the provinces, when they were in difficulties, to supply them with pecuniary aid, and help them by their influence at the palace, was their peculiar office, and it constituted their peculiar privilege and power. Sometimes, as in the case of Victor, they exceeded their rightful power, and were then compelled to retract, by the reaction of the independent churches of Christendom. Fifty years later, Cyprian of Carthage yielded a qualified supremacy to Rome, which was never allowed before, and which he afterwards constantly denied.

The recent discovery (1851) of the lost work of Hippolytus—"Against all the Heresies"—puts us in possession of a vast treasure of new information, doubling our knowledge of earlier Christian antiquity. This greatest of all his works, among other things, lets in a light altogether new upon the internal history of the church of Rome, from A.D. 190 to A.D. 230. The genius of Dorner and Neander had divined, that during this period there must have been a theological struggle, if not a change of system, but the facts respecting it were unknown till now. These facts show, moreover, a further struggle, and change in regard to the constitution and discipline of the church itself, of most pernicious and portentous import—namely, the abandonment of the fundamental principle of church purity, viz.: a converted (*i. e.*, spiritually regenerated) membership. This change, introduced by Calistus (A.D. 220), and after much resistance, confirmed by the election of Cornelius (A.D. 251), accounts for the most difficult phenomena in the subsequent history of the church of Rome, down to

this day. From Hippolytus, we learn that this lax system was artfully based upon a false interpretation of the parable of the tares, by a bishop, who, if we may credit Hippolytus, in his detailed account of his career, was only an artful hypocrite from the beginning, pre-eminently a tare among the wheat. The whole great reactionary movement, culminating in Novatianism, is here for the first time truly explained.

The assumption of spiritual power, which belongs only to God and the conscience, and the exercise of social and civil power by a hierarchy, which absorbs the rights of the congregation, as Bunsen remarks, were the two fundamental errors which led to the whole tragical complication, both as regards doctrine and discipline.

The earliest writings of Hippolytus himself, beginning with his "Cause of the Universe," evidently belong to the reign of Severus (A.D. 191-211); but his "Refutation of all the Heresies," is among the latest, as it is the depository, not only of the historical learning, and theological and philosophical acuteness of the author, but of the leading events of his life, in connection with a great and difficult crisis of the church of Rome.

To understand the epithets of "most sweet," and "most benevolent," and, as Jerome calls him, "most eloquent;" to understand the unbounded admiration in which he was held in after ages, in the church of Rome, which canonized him as one of her noblest saints and martyrs, we must leave out of sight his controversy with Calistus, and look at him as the serene thinker, with his wide heart for the universality of God's love to mankind in Christ; his glowing love of liberty, and of the free agency of man as being the specific organ of

the Divine Spirit, and the only one congenial to the very nature of God. These are generally his distinguishing features.

His conviction that God works alone by the agency of the free spirit, and that, therefore, all exercise of authority is subordinate, in his eyes, to the fulfilment of the duties connected with it, made Hippolytus speak with a noble frankness of the regal, as well as episcopal authority. Though himself a bishop, he says: "An ungodly king is no longer a king, but a tyrant, nor is a bishop oppressed by ignorance, or by evil inclinations, any longer a bishop, but he is one falsely so called, chosen by men and not by God. It follows, therefore, that they will not escape his judgment. Neither let a bishop set himself up above the deacons and the presbyters, nor, indeed, the presbyter above the people; for the existence of the whole community rests on reciprocity."

His life-long struggle for truth and right against falsehood and violence, was crowned by martyrdom, under the tyrant Maximin (A.D. 236-238). At first he was banished to Sardinia, together with Pontianus, then bishop of Rome; but on his return, he was accused before the prefect of that city, and condemned to be bound on wild horses, and so torn to pieces. This failing to kill him, he was despatched by a soldier's sword.

ORIGEN.

ORIGEN, surnamed Adamantius, from his strength of constitution and iron labors, was born in Alexandria,

A.D. 185. His father, Leonidas, was a Christian and a man of letters, who, early discerning the rare talents of his boy, gave him the best means of instruction, secular and religious, superintending the latter himself. Every day, Origen committed, and recited to his father, some portion of the Scriptures, and gave evidence of early and earnest piety. The delighted father, it is said, would often kiss his bosom as he lay asleep, rejoicing over him as a living temple of the Holy Ghost.

In the persecution of Severus, A.D. 202, Leonidas was thrown into prison, where his son exposed his life to visit him. But his anxious mother, to preserve her child, hid his clothes, and thus forcibly kept him at home. Origen then wrote to his father, entreating him, not even for their sakes, to faint in the hour of trial. The father was put to death, and his estate confiscated, and the widow was left with six helpless children, besides Origen, then but seventeen. A rich and pious woman received him into her house, and he still prosecuted his studies, and his private methods of doing good.

Origen had studied, under the famous Clement, in the Christian catechetical school, but the school had been broken up by the severity of the persecution. Encouraged by Demetrius, the bishop, and others who knew his purity of life, great attainments, and glowing zeal, he revived the school, and was appointed catechist in the place of Clement, A.D. 204. He now freed himself from dependence by selling his classical library to a man who agreed to pay him four oboles (about ten cents) a day, on which the young teacher managed to live, sleeping on the floor, going without shoes, and wearing

but one coat. He even went so far, to avoid temptation, or cut off occasion of offence, as to emasculate himself. This he tried to keep a secret, but it could not be concealed, and was afterwards used against him by his enemies, including Demetrius, who seems on this account to have refused him ordination. Still, pupils from all quarters, both Christians and Pagans, sought his instructions, and many of the latter were by him converted to Christ; several of whom became martyrs. His own life was in constant danger. He was sought for by the furious heathen, and only escaped by continually changing his residence from house to house, and of course his school also.

He was once seized, and, dressed in the robes of a priest of Serapis, was placed at the steps of the temple, with a branch of palm to distribute, in the usual way, to the worshippers of the idol. He did as he was bidden, but said to each of the people, "Receive this palm, not of the idol, but of Christ."

The inquisitive ardor of his mind led him to trace the vestiges of truth in all human systems, after the manner of his master Clement, who was an eclectic in philosophy. We may not doubt that he sought to separate the true from the false. But if he succeeded in holding fast what was good, it is certain that he did not reject much that was false and evil. From his book on First Principles, it appears that, as matters of faith, he held almost the entire system of Biblical theology, common to Christians, reduced to systematic form; but he retains, in that same book, as open questions, and avows as his own opinions, much that is totally inconsistent with these Biblical truths, and, as Bunsen himself

admits, far beyond the boundaries of human reason. The atmosphere of philosophical speculation which he breathed in Alexandria; a secret pride of intellect, too subtle to be detected by himself; and a still more subtle spirit of self-righteousness, growing out of his self-denying habits of life; combined to lead him away from the simplicity of the gospel, even while honestly set for its defence. He seems not to have known or respected the fixed limits of the human mind in reference to God and the universe. He would sound the Infinite.

Hence, though a firm believer in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, Origen applied to their interpretation an allegorical method borrowed from Plato and the heathen philosophers, by which they could be made to teach any thing he pleased. Besides the plain grammatical and historical sense, he assigned to them a *psychical*, or moral sense; and beyond this, a spiritual, or rather allegorical sense, which depends altogether upon the ingenuity of the interpreter. Thus, in Exod. i. 15–22, for example, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, represents the Devil; and the male and female children of the Hebrews are the rational and animal faculties of the soul—the former of which the Devil seeks to destroy, in order that man may become wholly sensual and devilish. The Midwives, are the Old and New Testaments; Pharaoh's Daughter, is the Church, after she has left the house of her iniquitous father, and been bathed in the waters of baptism. And so the allegory runs on to the end of the history.

Every friend of rational piety must lament that a man of so much learning and unaffected godliness, should not only adopt, but recommend a principle of

Biblical interpretation so purely arbitrary, absurd, and dangerous; before which every thing certain in the Oracles of God instantly vanishes.

Origen is no sacramentalist. With him, baptism and communion are symbols of holy things, inwrought in the soul, through faith, and have no saving effect of themselves. He says, expressly—"If any one is previously dead to sin, he of course is buried with Christ. But if any one does not before die to sin, he cannot be buried with Christ; for no one, while alive, is buried. But if he is not buried with Christ, neither is he legitimately baptized."

About 212, Origen visited Rome, where he heard Hippolytus, and adopted from him the method of delivering short discourses, called Homilies—generally expounding some passage of Scripture. In Greece, Palestine, and Cappadocia, afterwards, he formed the acquaintance of other eminent men, both orthodox and heretics. This liberal and courageous course made him more popular, if not more useful, on his return to Alexandria. Many heretics there were converted, and among them Ambrosius, a rich layman, who became his warmest friend and helper. He learned the Hebrew language, to qualify himself for his two great works, the "Hexapla" and "Tetrapla." His work on First Principles was published at this time, prematurely, as he thought thirty years later. He also began to write and publish his commentaries on Scripture, a specimen of which we have given.

In 236, Origen went to Palestine, with letters from Demetrius, and while there was ordained a presbyter in Cesarea, by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem; a step

which, whether right or wrong, made Demetrius his enemy. An Egyptian synod was convened, and they pronounced Origen a heretic, particularly on account of his opinion in favor of the final salvation of all men, and even of Satan himself. He was deposed from his office as catechist of Alexandria, and never resumed it again, though it was given to his friend Heraclas. He was condemned also at Rome; but found friends among the bishops of Greece, Phœnicia, Palestine, and Arabia. To one of these friends he wrote very mildly on the injustice of his enemies. "We must rather pity than hate them, rather pray for them than curse them; for we are created to bless, not to curse."

In 238, the persecution of Maximin threw many of his friends into prison, the presage of a death of torture. It was then that Origen wrote his powerful address on Martyrdom. For two years he was concealed in Capadocia; whence he was called to Athens, in Greece.

When Philip, the Arab, ascended the throne in 244, Origen carried on a correspondence with the royal family. In his reign, Origen, now about sixty, wrote his book against Celsus, a most happy apology for Christianity against one of its acutest and bitterest enemies. He also visited Arabia, and succeeded, in a great council there, in reclaiming those who advocated the sleep of the soul between death and the resurrection. Here he learned that one of his pupils, Dionysius (who had succeeded Heraclas in the catechetical school), was chosen bishop of Alexandria.

In the Decian persecution, 250, Origen was thrown into prison, and subjected to a series of tortures, to compel him to renounce his Christian faith. Old as he was,

he bore them with patient fortitude, and was released. But in 254 he died, in the hope of the Gospel, being in his seventieth year; closing in peace a life of arduous labors almost without a parallel. His fame was clouded by many serious errors, yet he seems to have truly loved the Saviour, and zealously served him through a long life of self-denying toil. The Christian world, for ages, was divided between the admirers and the opposers of his voluminous writings.

CYPRIAN.

THE power of divine grace has seldom been more clearly manifested than in the conversion of Cyprian of Carthage. He was of Pagan descent, but of a wealthy family, and was a professor of oratory in that city. Like other idolaters he lived without God, or holiness, or hope of heaven, until through Cecilius, a presbyter of the church, he was brought to examine and embrace the Gospel. The change of heart which he then experienced is thus beautifully described by himself in a letter to his friend Donatus.

“Hear, then, what is felt before it is learnt, and is not collected by a long course of speculation, but is imbibed by the soul, through the compendium of grace ripening her as at once. While I lay in darkness and the night of paganism, and fluctuated uncertain and dubious in the sea of a tempestuous age, ignorant of my own life, alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a harsh and difficult thing, as my manners then

were, to obtain what divine grace had promised, that a man should be born again; and that being animated by regenerating love to a new life, he should strip himself of what he was before, and though the body remained the same, he should in his mind become altogether a new creature. How can so great a change be possible, said I, that a man should at once and suddenly put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him?

“But after the new birth had made me a new creature indeed, immediately and in an amazing manner, dubious things began to be cleared up, things once shut to be opened, dark things to shine forth; what before seemed difficult, now appeared feasible, and that was now evidently practicable, which had been deemed impossible.

“Of God it is,—of God, I say, even all that we can do; thence we live, thence we have strength, and thence conceive and assume all vigor. What a power, what an energy is this?”

It is refreshing to find such a testimony in this age to experimental religion. It proves that the doctrines of grace, regeneration, and justification were yet cherished in the churches, and that their power was felt. Hence, without any great learning or philosophy, Cyprian rises as a Phoenix in the church, simple, practical, earnest, liberal, devoted with all his heart and soul to the service of Christ. Like Barnabas he sold his estates to relieve the poor.

The year after his conversion, 247, Cyprian was ordained a presbyter, and the next year was chosen bishop, that is the chief presbyter of the church. He

did not seek this office, but yielded to the suffrages of his brethren, although five presbyters voted against him.

He entered upon his office with integrity, and with sincere desire to discharge its duties in concert with his brethren. But the times were evil. The very next year, 249, the Decian persecution broke out in all its systematic and pitiless fury, driving him into a reluctant retirement for two and a half years, and devouring his flock. From his retreat he wrote letters of warning, sympathy, and encouragement to his suffering brethren, which yet remain as a monument of his wisdom and love.

To add to his sorrows, there was a division in the church of Carthage, headed by Felicissimus, one of the presbyters, who had voted against him. But on his return, in 251, this was gradually healed. This was the origin of his famous tract, "The Unity of the Church," in which he places that unity in the agreement of the bishops, and recognizes, for the first time in history, the supremacy of Rome as the chair of St. Peter; on which all the stupendous claims of that arrogant church were afterwards built. One is ready to exclaim, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" His letter to Fidus laid the foundation also for a *literal* infant baptism, and infant communion.

Under the reign of Gallus, for a short time, the persecution was renewed, but his death in 253 gave the Christians a respite of several years. These repeated persecutions led Cyprian to infer, that the end of the world was at hand.

In 258 Valerian renewed the persecutions, and

though Cyprian, as before, escaped for a time, he was at length seized, and brought before the proconsul Paternus.

“The sacred emperor Valerian and Gallienus have done me the honor to direct letters to me, in which they have decreed, that all men ought to adore the gods whom the Romans adore, and on pain of being slain with the sword. I advise you to consult for yourself and honor them.”

“I am a Christian, and know no God but the one true God, who created heaven and earth. This God we Christians serve. We pray night and day for all men, and even for the emperors.”

“You shall die the death of a malefactor if you persevere in this inclination.”

“That is a good inclination which fears God, and therefore must not be changed.”

“You must, then, by the will of the princes, be banished.”

“He is no exile, who has God in his heart; for the earth is the Lord’s.”

“Tell me, before you go, where are your presbyters?”

“Your best princes forbid informers; I ought not, therefore, to discover them. But you may find them; you yourselves do not approve of Christians voluntarily offering themselves to you.”

“I will make you discover them by torments.”

“By me they shall not be discovered.”

“Our principles have ordered that Christians hold no conventicles, and whoever breaks this rule shall be put to death.”

Cyprian calmly replied, “Do as you are ordered.”

After some further attempts to work upon his fears, Paternus banished him to Curubes, a town fifty miles from Carthage.

In 258, Cyprian returned from exile, by permission, living on an estate near Carthage, which had been restored to him. Here he regulated the affairs of the church, and distributed what he had left. Here, also, he was seized by order of the new proconsul, and brought before his judgment seat. The first interrogation was,

“Are you Thascius Cyprian?”

“I am.”

“Are you he whom the Christians call their bishop?”

“I am.”

“Our princes have ordered you to worship the gods.”

“That I shall not do.”

“You will do better to consult your safety, and not despise the gods.”

“My safety and virtue is Christ the Lord, whom I desire to serve forever.”

“I pity your case and would wish to consult for you.”

“I do not wish that things should be otherwise with me, than that, adoring my God, I may hasten to him with all the ardor of my soul: for the afflictions of this persecution are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

“You have lived sacrilegiously a long time, and have formed into a society men of an impious conspiracy, and have shown yourselves an enemy to the gods and to the counsels of our princes. You have ever been a father and a ringleader to the impious sect; you shall therefore be an example for the rest, and they shall

learn their duty by your blood. Let Thascius Cyprian be put to death by the sword."

"God be praised!" said the martyr. He was then led by the soldiers to the place of execution, followed by crowds of exulting Pagans and weeping Christians, bound the napkin over his eyes with his own hands, and calmly yielded his neck to the sword, in the attitude of prayer.

NOVATIAN.

NOVATIAN, of Phrygia, was contemporary with Cyprian of Carthage. He was educated in the stoic philosophy and became a Christian minister in Rome. Like Cyprian, he exerted a vast influence, not only on his age, but on future generations, though in opposite directions. A severe sickness seems to have been the means of his conversion. Not being expected to live, he was baptized on his bed, by circumfusion—the first instance of *clinic baptism* (so called) in history. It was thought so defective, that, on his recovery, and call to the ministry, he was admitted to ordination as a presbyter with difficulty.

In the Decian persecution, Fabianus was an early martyr, and his successor, Macedonius Trophimus, sacrificing to idols, was deposed. It is reported in the *Martyrium Novatiani*, that at this time Novatian was the only presbyter who stood his ground as a confessor of Christ.

At the close of the persecution, 251, Cornelius and Novatian were put in nomination for the bishopric of

Rome. They represented the two parties that had long struggled in that church, on the principles of a lax or strict communion. (See Hippolytus.) Cornelius was elected by a large majority. Novatian and his friends submitted.

Soon after, a council of sixty bishops met at Rome, to decide on the case of the *lapsed* in the persecution. The fallen prelate, Trophimus, had many friends, and, to gain them, the council restored him to lay communion. This act was regarded by Novatian and his friends as compromising the purity of the church of Rome, and all who endorsed it. A church which tolerates mortal sin, like idolatry, cannot be the church of Christ.

Another church was therefore established, and Novatian was chosen its bishop. He was ordained by several bishops from the country. Five presbyters, and most of the confessors of Rome, at first joined him, though some afterwards left him and returned to Cornelius. Fabias, bishop of Antioch, and Marcian, bishop of Arles, with other prelates, also sympathized with his views. Yet the greater part, and Cyprian especially, vehemently opposed him. Rival communities to the Catholic party, however, were soon formed throughout all parts of the empire, under the name of Cathari, the Pure. These churches for many centuries flourished, and there seems to have been much of the vital power and simplicity of the Gospel among them. They furnished a pure example, and often a refuge, to the dominant party.

At the Council of Nice, 325, Constantine tried to obtain their consent to unite with the Catholics in

church communion, and in the State establishment. But they stood firm against the imperial seducer. Socrates, the historian, gives many beautiful instances of their love to their orthodox brethren of the now ROMAN Catholic Church. This speaks well for their amiable feelings towards those who charged them with rigor in denying the validity of their church constitution, and baptized all who came over to them from the recognized Roman church.

Novatian churches were tolerated by the Christian emperors until the time of Honorius, when their church buildings were taken away, and they were punished with death. They fled for refuge to the recesses of the Alps and the Pyrenees, and their name (which often re-appears in the middle ages), was at length merged in the general name of Waldenses.

Novatian, after a faithful pastorate, suffered martyrdom under Valerian, 258. He is represented as a man of great mildness, deep piety, learning, and eloquence. He has left a few of his works, which reached our times, especially his excellent treatise on the Trinity. He was much defamed by his enemies; but we must remember our Lord's text, "By their fruits shall ye know them."



GREGORY THAUMATURGUS.

THE latter half of the third century is not as fruitful in distinguished men, as the century before, and this decline may be accounted for by causes already indicated. But amid the arid spiritual dearth, and great

permanent division of orthodox Christendom, with rival bishops in Rome and all the principal cities, God had many laborers and successful servants.

Among them may be reckoned Gregory, surnamed *Thaumaturgus*, or the wonder-worker. The name was given him in the next century, and probably the good man would have been the first to disclaim it in his lifetime. The facts worthy of remembrance in his history, are these.

Gregory was a native of *Neocesarea*, the metropolis of *Cappadocia*. His father, being a Pagan, educated him in idolatry and pagan literature. When fourteen, his father died, but his mother sent him to *Alexandria* to complete his education. There he studied the Platonic philosophy, and was noted for his good habits and diligent study.

About 236, while *Origen* was teaching at *Cesarea*, in *Palestine*, Gregory became his pupil, together with his brother *Athenodorus*, and his friend *Firmilian*. Under him they studied five years, and he led them to an acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, which resulted in their conversion. His brother, as well as himself, became a Christian pastor. A letter of *Origen* is still extant, in which he exhorts Gregory to devote his life to promote the cause of Christ, and urges him to pray fervently for the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

We know (from 1 Peter i. 1) that there were Christians in *Cappadocia* in the first century, but the life of Gregory (written a century later by his namesake of *Nyssen*) informs us that at the time he settled in *Neocesarea*, the populous capital, it was wholly given to idolatry, and that he found but seventeen Christians in

it. One of these, Musonius, a man of influence, received him into his house, and in a short time crowds attended on his ministry, and were converted by his preaching. This great outpouring of the Holy Spirit wrought wonderful changes, which, in after times, were confounded with the gift of miracles. But there is no contemporary evidence that he claimed or exercised this gift. The story that he received a creed from the evangelist John, and the virgin Mary, is beyond question the fiction of the Catholics of the fourth century. It is surprising that Mr. Milner should give it a moment's credit.

Through the stormy times of the Decian and Valerian persecution, he was preserved, and continued his successful labors until the first year of the emperor Aurelian, 271.

He was present at the first council of Antioch, where Paul of Samosata was condemned for denying the proper divinity of Christ.

A little before his death, he caused strict inquiry to be made as to the number of idolaters remaining in the city of Neocesarea, or rather of the number unacquainted with Christianity, and it was found to be seventeen. When informed of this, he sighed, and appealed to God, how much it troubled him that any of his fellow citizens should yet be ignorant of the way of salvation; yet expressed his thankfulness that whereas at first he had found but seventeen Christians, he had left only seventeen idolaters. After offering a prayer for the conversion of the unbelievers and the edification of the faithful, he peaceably gave up his soul to God.

His life is a lesson for Christian pastors, who "watch for souls, as they that must give account."

PAMPHILUS.

THIS remarkable man, the intimate friend of the historian Eusebius, was a presbyter of the church of Cesarea, in Palestine, where Eusebius was afterwards so long bishop. Pamphilus was one of the most learned and pious men of his time, and spent his life in aid of most disinterested benevolence. He always kept several copies of the Holy Scriptures by him (some of them transcribed with the greatest accuracy by his own hand), which he lent out to persons who had a desire to read them, whether to men or women; and others he gave away.

He erected a library in Cesarea, which is said to have contained 30,000 volumes—a prodigious number in that age of manuscript books. It seems to have been collected chiefly for the good of the church, and to lend out to all religiously disposed people. Jerome particularly says this was the design, and as Adam Clarke observes, it is the earliest instance known of a CIRCULATING LIBRARY.

In the great persecution under Dioclesian, the fury of the Pagans fell on this holy and useful man. He was brought before Urbanus, the governor, who, after proposing many curious questions to try his repute for vast learning, commanded him to sacrifice to the gods. Pamphilus refusing, Urbanus ordered him to be cruelly tortured. He was then cast into prison, where he languished for two years, and was then put to death. Eusebius

wrote an Apology for him in six books, and added his friend's name to his own.

Dr. Lardner well observes : " Where can such a man as this be found in the heathen world ? How rare were such examples under the Mosaic institution, of men who employed their whole time in improving their own minds and serving others, without noise and ostentation, and without worldly views, and at last quietly resigned their lives, rather than disown their principles."

EUSEBIUS.

It is somewhat surprising that so little is recorded of the life of a man to whom the whole Christian world owes so much, as to Eusebius Pamphilus, bishop of Cesarea. Origen excepted, he was the most learned and laborious of all the writers of antiquity, and in the lasting value, number, and quantity of his writings, surpassed Origen himself, whose Hexapla he accurately reproduced. Yet of his parents, education, and the circumstances of his conversion, nothing is known. The centre of an illumination which filled the entire hemisphere of the ancient world, his own early life is left in obscurity and oblivion.

Born, probably, in Palestine, at Cesarea itself, before 270, the first we know of him is, that he was associated there with his friend Pamphilus, in the joint production of works of great learning, designed for the extension and confirmation of the Christian faith. The great library collected there supplied the sources. How he escaped when his friend fell a victim, 204-6, is un-

known. Through all that fierce Dioclesian persecution, he must have been prosecuting his great works in secret.

After Constantine came to the throne, Eusebius emerges into light, and is at once acknowledged as the most learned man of his times. He was chosen bishop of Cesarea in 314. He took a prominent part in the Council of Nice, 325, drawing up the code with the preamble, in its original form, and signing it in the terms finally adopted. His Ecclesiastical History, Cleoraicon, Evangelical Preparation, and Evangelical Demonstration, are all brought down to that period, though he survived Constantine, and wrote the life of this first Christian emperor. Most of his other numerous works are lost, but these remain to attest his arduous labors and universal learning, consecrated, if not always wisely, yet honestly, to Christ, and the highest good of mankind. He died about 340, and was buried in Cesarea.



DONATUS.

THE Dioclesian, as well as the Decian persecution, was the occasion of a serious division in the Christian church; though in the latter case it was provincial and not universal like the former.

Donatus was a Numidian bishop in North Africa, who refused to acknowledge Cecilian, chosen bishop of Carthage in 311, as a lawful bishop, because the bishops who ordained him, particularly Felix of Aptunges; were *Traditors*, *i. e.*, men who in the late persecution had delivered up the sacred books to be burned. This act

was regarded as equivalent to a denial of Christ, and all who were guilty of it were deemed unworthy of Christian communion, and their administrations invalid. But as the majority of the Catholics sustained Cecilian and his friends, Donatus withdrew from the communion of the Catholic church, and was followed by about half the bishops and churches of North Africa. They rebaptized all who joined them from what they thought a communion fatally polluted, and the Catholics retorted upon them in the same way. Like the Novatians, they also excommunicated apostates, and declared that *purity of life was essential to a true church*.

When Constantine first published the edict of Milan, in 213, giving equal religious liberty to all, he ordered that the church property taken from the Christians in the late persecution should be restored alike to all. But in the next year, 314, he was induced to limit this restoration to the Catholic churches and virtually deny it to the Donatists. This injustice led to a complication of evils, and widened the breach between the two parties. It became a common saying among the Donatists: "What has the emperor to do with the church." "And what have bishops to do at court."

In 230, they numbered 172 bishops of their persuasion in North Africa alone, and a large portion of the people were either members of their churches, or connected with their congregations.

In 348 the emperor Constans attempted to subdue them by military force, which resulted in a popular insurrection and the formation of bands of lawless men called *Circumcellians*, who attacked the imperial army, and for thirteen years ravaged the regions of Numidia

and Massotania. These fanatics were not approved by the Donatist bishops or their churches, yet these last had to bear the odium of horrors which they detested and disavowed.

So great was the misery that martyrdom was eagerly sought, and many gave themselves up to the Catholic magistrates to be executed. Some, driven to madness, threw themselves down from rocks and precipices, and thus destroyed themselves.

At length persecution relaxed, and peace and prosperity returned. In 404, the number of their bishops was about 400, of whom 270 were present at a conference with the Catholics, whose bishops were present in about equal numbers.

Honorius, at that time, enacted penal laws against them, punishing rebaptism with death. For a time this had some effect. But in 430, under the Vandals, they regained their liberty, and their churches flourished until the conquests of the Saracens in the seventh century.



CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

It is necessary to know something of the character of this first Christian emperor, and of the changes introduced by him into the Christian church, in order to comprehend the position in history of all the illustrious men who came after him, whether connected with the *Roman Catholic Church* or the dissenters from its communion.

Constantine was the son of the Emperor Constantius

Chlorus and his wife Helena. He was born in Britain, A. D. 274, but was educated in the court of Dioclesian, in Nicomedia, and held by that emperor as a hostage for the fidelity of his father. On the accession of Galerius to supreme power, finding himself closely watched by that bloody persecutor, he escaped to the court of his father. The father soon after died, when the army unanimously chose Constantine his successor, as emperor of the West, including Gaul, Spain, and Britain, 306.

In 312, having conquered the Franks, he marched against Maxentius, the tyrant of Italy. On this march he is reported to have seen, one day, in the sky, the appearance of a flaming cross, with the words, "In this sign thou shalt conquer!" And he dreamed, the following night, that Christ appeared to him, and commanded him to make the cross the ensign of his army—which he did. Maxentius was conquered (Oct. 27, 312). Constantine entered Rome in triumph, liberated those unjustly imprisoned, and was declared by the senate, chief *Augustus*, and *Pontifex Maximus*.

In 313, in conjunction with Licinius, he issued, at Milan the memorable edict of toleration in favor of the Christians. This was, in fact, a decree of universal religious liberty, allowing to every one the right of conscience; restoring to the long persecuted Christians all the property which had been taken from them, and making them, equally with others, eligible to public offices.

This impartial edict marks the period of the triumph of the cross, and of the downfall of paganism. Had Constantine and his successors never departed from its

spirit and principles, Christianity would have been spared immense dishonor, mankind innumerable calamities, and the persecution of Christians by *Christians* would have been a thing unknown. But evil counsels prevailed; and within a year the emperor began a system of usurpation over the churches, by appointing imperial commissioners to settle questions of orthodoxy; and in 316 persecution was renewed under the Christian name. Constantine, though not yet baptized, called himself the "*external* bishop of the church" (without any protest from the Catholic bishops, not even the bishop of Rome), and changed its whole constitution to conform it to the new constitution of the State. Each of the four prefectures had its patriarch, each of the thirteen dioceses an archbishop, and each of the one hundred and seventeen provinces a metropolitan bishop, governing all the rest; and all were entrusted with civil as well as with ecclesiastical power. Splendid churches were built, and richly endowed; and, in the full sunshine of imperial favor, the Pagans hastened to profess the Christian name. The worship of saints and of the virgin Mary, and of the relics of real or supposititious martyrs—with pious frauds and monkish miracles—soon became universal.

This baleful union of the Catholic Church with the State, is the true origin of the *Roman Catholic Church*; but its apostolic and holy character, as the church of Christ, perished. The glory was departed. Great and good men were still found in the bosom of the establishment, like Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon; but these were often persecuted, and in most cases

yielded more or less to the torrent of superstition which rolled in on every side.

Constantine was sincere in his wish to establish order and peace throughout his empire. Many of his laws were wise and beneficial. He abolished the stoics, provided for poor children, heard and redressed complaints against his own officers, reduced the taxes, improved prisons, quickened the course of justice, and was a friend to the sick, to widows, and orphans. He forbade the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, in the distribution of claims inherited. He also crushed the licentiousness of divorce. He built a new capital, on the site of Byzantium, calling it after his own name, enriched with the spoils of the whole empire, but from which all the temples and worship of idols were by law excluded. Constantinople was designed to be the Christian, or New Rome. Highly favored by nature, there the nations poured their tribute and their trade, and Rome, the ancient mistress of the world, lost her sovereignty; though she afterwards regained it in a new form of priestly and papal dominion.

On his accession to power, Constantine found the Christian churches still independent, but not in a single communion, as when Tertullian was able to say, a century before, "We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope." The emperor found, in 313, three distinct bodies of Christians,—the Catholics, the Cathari, or Novatians, and the Donatists, all maintaining the same orthodox faith. (See NOVATIAN and DONATUS.) Had he given them impartial rights and protection under the laws as good citizens, truth and time, with the influence of the Holy Spirit, would have

again brought them together. But having assumed the supreme power over the Catholics, he was soon led to persecute Dissenters. And the evil did not stop here. In a few years the established church, under his special patronage, was rent asunder by the Arian controversy. After vain attempts to compose the storm, in 325, just after his conquest of Licinius had made him sole master of the Roman world, he summoned over three hundred bishops from all quarters to the Council of Nice, paid all their expenses, opened to them the great hall of his palace, and presided in person over the proceedings. He himself submitted to its decisions, subscribed its creed, and enforced it against the obstinate Arians by the civil arm. Yet within five years, through the influence of his sister Constantia, and the artful Eusebius of Nicomedia, he changed his opinion, recalled the Arian bishops, and Arius himself, and required the Catholics under penalty to receive them to fellowship. For fifty years the controversy raged, until Theodosius the Great settled it, by the weight of his imperial power, in favor of the Catholic party; for party it was, although doubtless the most orthodox, and the most numerous party in the church establishment.

Constantine was brave, yet mild and generous, indulgent to his subjects, the favorite of his people, and the terror of his enemies. He would gladly have comprehended both the Novatians and the Donatists in the established church; but finding it opposed to their conscientious convictions, he abandoned the attempt. They preferred purity and independence to all the splendors of imperial patronage.

Although strictly conforming to all the ritual of the

Catholic clergy, Constantine delayed his baptism till near the close of life. Finding his health failing early in 337, he sent for several bishops, to whom he solemnly professed his purpose to live as a disciple of Christ. He was then baptized by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, and died the 22d of May, 337, aged 64, after dividing his empire between his three sons, Constantine, Constans, and Constantius.

ATHANASIUS.

THIS great man was born in Alexandria, 296, and there received his education, under the bishop Alexander, whom he succeeded in that office, 326, just after the Council of Nice. His life was cast in the tempestuous times of the Arian controversy, which originated in the city of his birth, and under his own eye. He became the chief champion of the orthodox through the following forty-six years.

Nothing could more forcibly illustrate the evils of the connection between the church and the state, which began at that period, than the history of Athanasius. With every revolution of the government, with every change of creed, he found himself alternately honored or scorned, deposed or restored, vehemently lauded or violently hated.

Within ten years after he was made bishop of Alexandria he was deposed (through the influence of the Arians), by Constantine, and banished to Treves, in Gaul. Two years later the emperor, falling sick, recalled him, in 337; but his enemies once more got him deposed, and

Gregory, of Cappadocia, substituted in his place. He was declared innocent by the Council of Rome, 342, and by that of Sardis in 347, and was restored to his office in 349; but was once more banished by Constantine, and obliged to hide himself in the desert. About 360, he returned to Alexandria, but was again banished by Julian. He was recalled by the emperor Jovian, and restored to his see; but was again banished by Valens, the Arian emperor, in 367, who afterwards, however, restored him, so that, after so long and stormy a career, Athanasius died peacefully in 373, in the midst of his flock.

Such a brief sketch may well make every citizen of the United States rejoice in the removal of that pernicious union of church and state, which still afflicts the rest of the world.

Of this Athanasius became thoroughly convinced, as in one of his epistles he shows, by the cogent arguments, the injustice and futility of persecution for religious opinions. Among other things, he says: "It is the property of true religion to have no recourse to force, but to persuasion. But the State makes use of compulsion in matters of religion; and what is the consequence? Why, the church is filled with hypocrisy and impiety, and the faithful servants of Christ are obliged to hide themselves in caves and holes of the earth, or to wander about in the deserts."

Athanasius wrote much, and his principal writings remain. His influence was great, generally good, but by no means always salutary, if he wrote the Life of St. Anthony, the monk. It is utterly unworthy of so great a man. By associating holiness with hermit life, saint-

ship with a sheepskin dress, and miracles with monkish fasts and prayers, it fastened a lasting curse on Christendom.

HILARY OF POITIERS.

THIS greatest theologian of the fourth century—certainly in the West,—was born at Poitiers, in Gaul, in the province of Aquitain, about the year 300. His family were Pagan, but respectable. He early applied himself to the study of the heathen philosophers and poets, and of the Holy Scriptures, and thus acquired a vast amount of knowledge. His conversion was thus brought about: While reading the Pentateuch he was much struck with the description of the true God, whom he inwardly felt that he did not know. But when he took up the gospel for further information, he was astonished to learn that this God had become incarnate, and died for the sins of men. The love of Christ, the crucified, took possession of his heart, and became the power of God to his salvation. As long as he lived, he was the faithful, unblamable, efficient advocate of this great salvation, and no man of antiquity seems to have better understood and defended it.

The people of Poitiers, soon after his conversion, were so impressed with his eloquence and zeal, that they desired him for their bishop, though he had yet held no inferior office in the church, and was a married man, with a wife and one daughter. He was appointed accordingly, 350. We next hear of him, 355, in the Council of Milan. For opposing the Arians, Saturnius, bishop of Arles, got the emperor Constantius to banish him to Phrygia.

While there, he wrote his celebrated treatise on the Trinity, in twelve books, a work of unrivalled completeness and excellence, and other works, which so annoyed the Arians in the East, that they begged the emperor, in 360, to send him back again. He returned to his church a more able and useful man than before, and for many years stood pre-eminent among the bishops of Gaul, rolling back the current of error that was setting in upon the West.

He ended his holy and useful life in 367. From his rapid style, Jerome calls him "the Rhone of Latin eloquence."



ULPHILAS.

THE name of Ulphilas is differently written, but the remembrances of his services to religion ought not, and will not, perish from the memory of mankind. We know just enough of him to make us wish to know more.

According to Philostorgues, Ulphilas was a descendant from the captives carried off from Cappadocia, in the reign of Gallicenus, about 260. By the influence of their Christian captives, this barbarous German nation were induced to invite Christian traders among them, by whom numerous churches were collected and schools established, and the people gradually led to renounce their ancient paganism and profess the Christian faith. This, so far as we know, is the first introduction of the gospel among Germanic nations. A Gothic bishop,

named Theophilus, was present at the Council of Nice, and signed the creed there established.

The Goths thus appear to have received an orthodox faith. But they abandoned it in 376, when the Arian emperor, Valeus, permitted 1,200,000 of them to pass the Danube, and settle in Dacia, Alosia, and Thrace, within the Roman empire, on condition of their submitting to the Roman laws, and to the Arian faith. This treaty is said to have been negotiated on the part of the Goths by Ulphilas himself. Its terrible consequences to the empire he could not foresee. He was at the Arian Council of Constantinople, in 359, about eighteen years before, and is supposed to have favored their interest. Others doubt this. But none can doubt his talents, his piety, or his missionary zeal.

Anxious to give the Bible to the people, this excellent man invented an alphabet for them, and translated the whole into their language, with the exception of the books of Kings, which he omitted, it is said, lest this history should stimulate their passion for war. This reason does not seem sufficient, as it would equally apply to the book of Joshua. Ulphilas died in the reign of Theodosius, about 390.

BASIL, OF CESAREA.

BASIL, called the Great, son of Basil and Eumedia, was born in Cesarea, Cappadocia, about 328, of Christian parents. No pains seem to have been spared in his education, and his talents justified every expense. He visited the most eminent schools in the empire, at Cesa-

rea of Palestine, Alexandria, Athens and Constantinople. At Athens, he had, as fellow student, his friend Gregory Nazianzen, and Julian, afterwards called the Apostate, who, when emperor, tried to restore Paganism, and put down Christianity. At Constantinople he attended the lectures of the famous Libanius, the Pagan philosopher. But God touched his heart, and partly through the influence of his pious sister, Maerina, he was led to devote himself to the service of Christ. He was baptized at the age of twenty-eight, and within three years after, was ordained a presbyter by Eusebius, bishop of Cesarea, his native city, whom he succeeded in 370. He died in 379, trusting in Christ.

He was a man of rare gifts, of high culture and eloquence, of sincere and glowing piety, self-denying habits, and quenchless zeal. But his piety, like that of most men of his age, was tainted with superstition and self-righteousness, and his zeal was largely expended in founding monasteries, and establishing a system of rules for their government, which bore his name for ages. He certainly improved a bad system. He was the first to plant both monasteries and nunneries in the neighborhood of great cities, and make them schools for the education of youth. As a bishop, he ordained few who had not been thus trained. His fame and influence thus spread over the churches, both of the East and of the West. His monks were not idle mendicants, but were taught to labor for their own support, and for the benefit of the poor. His nuns were employed in hospitals.

He wrote much, especially against the Arians; but his best works are his Commentaries upon the Scriptures, which were highly esteemed.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

THIS great orator of the eastern church, was the son of Gregory, bishop of Nazianzen, in Cappadocia, from 325 to 374. He was born in 325, and was devoted to the Lord by his pious mother Nounæ before his birth. His education was begun at Cesarea, in Cappadocia. Thence he went to Cesarea in Palestine, to Alexandria, and to Athens, to complete it. At the latter place, he had among his fellow-students, Julian (afterwards the apostate), and Basil, his bosom friend through life. He remained there five years. On his return to Nazianzen in 356, he was baptized, about the same time as his friend Basil, having been a catechumen for some time before. He married Theosebia, the sister of Basil, but left her to become a monk. Three years later, his aged father called him from his seclusion to be his assistant, and he obeyed, he says, reluctantly. In 362, he preached his first sermon as presbyter in his father's church.

After the death of the Emperor Julian, Gregory delivered two orations against him, which breathe a bitter spirit of resentment, perhaps less personal than popular. In 372, his friend Basil offered him the bishopric of Sasina, which he indignantly refused; and on the death of his father, in 374, retired to Selucia in obscurity. In 379, he yielded to the importunities of his friends, and accepted a call to Constantinople, to revive the orthodox interest in that city, in which he was very successful. This was the zenith of his eloquence and fame. The general council of Constantinople elected

him patriarch and metropolitan of all Greece. But, learning that objections were raised, he declined the post, and returned to his former charge at Nazianzen, and discharged his duties till 383, when he retired from public life. His religious poems were composed at this period, and they present the fairest view of his character. He died in 390.

Those who would love and revere this great man, will find the reasons for these feelings more in his poems than in his orations, which, though splendid, are full of superstition and intolerance.



JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

JOHN, surnamed Chrysostom, or the golden-mouthed, from his extraordinary genius and eloquence, was born at Antioch, the capital of Syria, of Christian parentage, in 354. His father, Secundus, died in military service, and his early training was under his pious mother Arathusa. She instilled into his heart the gospel of Jesus at home, and also procured for him the best instruction in all branches of learning. Three years he was in the family of Meletius, bishop of Antioch. Among his other teachers, were Libanius, the famous Pagan rhetorician; who, on being asked who was worthy to succeed him in his school, replied, "John, if the Christians had not stolen him from us."

Under Diodorus (afterwards bishop of Tarsus), he studied sacred literature, and there learned to discard the allegorical interpretation of Origen, and to follow

the literal and historical sense of scripture. He was thus formed to become, through grace, the best expositor of scripture, as well as the noblest orator of his age. He was baptized at the age of twenty-three.

Carried away, at the age of twenty-four, by the prevailing enthusiasm for monastic life, he spent seven years in studious seclusion, and by his severe self-denials nearly ruined his constitution. He commenced author at twenty-six, and in his next year, 380, on returning to Antioch, was ordained deacon, and five years later a presbyter, when he began to preach, 386. For twelve years he produced a prodigious number of sermons, homilies, and orations, of the finest quality that Antioch had ever known since the disciples were first called Christians; and a Christian population of one hundred thousand souls crowded to his ministry.

In 398, he was transferred to Constantinople, that the imperial court might enjoy the enchantment of his eloquence. But he carried with him here all the noble simplicity and faithfulness of his character, applying himself to effect much needed reforms in every department of society, and plans for spreading the gospel, by missionary effort, far and wide, among the Goths and other nations. His efforts were for a time successful.

But his life was too holy, his preaching too pungent, and his discipline too strict, to be long acceptable in that corrupt metropolis of Christendom. Both the court and the clergy, partly from envy and partly from resentment, combined against him in 403, and an order was issued for his banishment, on the most frivolous charges. The condemned and banished man calmly submitted to the sentence, and was carried away by night, to avoid

the resistance of the people. But when morning came, and the news spread through the city, the people tumultuously assembled, and demanded his recall, saying that "the sun might as well cease to shine, as Chrysostom cease to preach." Their violence alarmed the empress Eudoxia, and she recalled him.

The very next year, however, his enemies again prevailed, and in 404, he was forcibly removed from his metropolitan see, to Cacus, a city of Armenia. Here he was very kindly received, and he preached and labored in every way to do good, for three years.

The following extract from a letter to a friend, written soon after his removal, will illustrate the style and spirit of the man: "When driven from the city, I cared nothing for it. But I said to myself, if the empress wishes to banish me, let her banish me—the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If she would saw me asunder, let her saw me asunder. I have Isaiah for a pattern. If she would plunge me in the sea, I remember Jonah. If she would thrust me into the fiery furnace, I see the three children enduring that. If she would cast me to wild beasts, I call to mind Daniel in the den of lions. If she would stone me, let her stone me, I have before me Stephen, the proto-martyr. If she would take my head from me, let her take it, I have John the Baptist. If she would deprive me of my worldly goods, let her do it—'naked came I from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return.' An apostle has told me: 'God respecteth no man's person;' and 'if I yet please men, I shall not be the servant of Christ.' And David clothes me with armor, saying: 'I will speak of thy testimony before kings, and will not be ashamed.'"

After three years' residence in Armenia, Chrysostom found his health failing, and he was ordered to Pityus, in Colchis, on the Black sea, but he died on the road thither, 408, at the age of 54.

DIDYMUS.

DIDYMUS, of Alexandria, was the wonder of his age. Born there about 310, he lost his sight in his fifth year, by a distemper. Yet his misfortune did not prevent him from excelling in all kinds of learning.

He arrived at such proficiency in literature, science, and theology, as at length placed him at the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, where his fame drew to him numbers from distant parts, some to see him only, but others to become his scholars. Among the latter were Jerome, Rufinus, Palladius, and Isidore.

He was condemned by the fifth Lateran Council, as a follower of Origen. But Jerome affirms that he was orthodox, and that he died in the communion of the Catholic Church, in 394, in his 85th year.

He left many writings, most of which are lost, but his chief work, on the Holy Spirit, remains, according to Clarke, "an admirable work of an admirable man."

SISIUNIUS.

SISIUNIUS was a bishop of the Novatians, in Constantinople, at the close of the fourth century. He succeeded

Agilius, a man of admirable sanctity and virtue, who had governed the flock for forty years. The historian Socrates, a contemporary in the same city, speaks of Sisiunius in the highest terms of respect.

He was an eloquent man, an excellent philosopher, had diligently cultivated the art of logic, and was incomparably well versed in the sacred Scriptures. All the bishops who succeeded him, loved and honored him. Moreover, all the eminent personages of the senatorial order had a great affection for him, and admired him. He wrote many books ; but he was more admired for his speaking than for his writings. In his countenance and voice, in his dress and aspect, and in the whole of his action and deportment, there was much gracefulness, by reason of which accomplishments, he was beloved by all sects. "Such was the high estimation in which he was held by his own people," Socrates adds, that "his word was law."

With the gravity and earnestness of a man of God, he blended a brilliant fancy and ready wit. One of the best examples of it, is the following : When Chrysostom came to Constantinople, in 398, as metropolitan, flushed with his new power, and full of zeal for the extermination of error, he met Sisiunius, not as a brother, but as a rival, and said to him, with great heat : "You are a heretic, and I will make you leave off preaching." Sisiunius answered : "I'll give you a reward, if you will free me from the labor of it." "O ! if the office is laborious," exclaimed Chrysostom, "you may go on with it."

Sisiunius died in 407, and was succeeded by Chrysan-

thus, a man of signal prudence and modesty, under whom the churches of the Novatians increased.

AMBROSE.

AMBROSE, bishop of Milan, was the son of a pretorian prefect of Gaul. He was born at Treves, about 340. His father dying, he was taken by his mother to Rome, with his brother Satyrus, and his sister Marcellina, a Christian virgin, through whom he was partially drawn to the knowledge of Christ.

He studied law, and acquired such reputation as to gain the favor of Anicius Probus, prefect of Italy, who made him at length governor of Liguria, of which Milan was the capital. His mildness won the hearts of the people, and his wisdom secured their prosperity.

In 374, on the decease of the Arian bishop of Milan, there was a great division of the people on the choice of a successor; the Arians and the orthodox each eager to secure the success of its chosen candidate. Ambrose entered the church to quell the tumult, when a voice, from a child, cried out: "Ambrose, bishop." It was received as a voice from heaven, both parties uniting in calling him to the vacant office, though he was yet but a catechumen. He remonstrated at first, but yielded to their entreaties; was baptized, November 30th, passed through the previous orders in the course of one week, and on the 7th of December, was ordained the Catholic bishop of Milan. Such was the singular state of religion

in the established church of the empire at that period, A.D. 374.

Ambrose now gave up his property to the use of the poor, became an ascetic, and studied theology under Simplicianus. Without great learning, he had a noble heart and a warm imagination, a commanding presence and popular eloquence. He was sincerely devout, and an ardent lover of sacred music, which he greatly promoted in his church. He also wrote and collected a volume of hymns. He abolished many abuses, and restored discipline. He had the courage to excommunicate the emperor Theodosius, for the massacre of Thessalonica; an example which the popes of the middle ages did not forget.

He died in 397, deeply regretted by his people.

He left numerous writings, of which the most valuable is his Comment on the Psalms. Here he rises above his habit of allegory, shows an intimate acquaintance with the workings of the heart, and the fountain of true wisdom. The style is pleasing, as abounding in description; powerful, as illustrated with suitable examples; and persuasive, from the elegance of the diction, the force of the arguments, and the earnestness of a self-convinced spirit.

In his books *On Offices*, occurs this noble passage, in which he urges to Christian liberality: "It is much better to preserve immortal spirits for the Lord, than gold. He who sent forth the apostles without gold, gathered together the church without gold. The church possesses gold, not to keep it, but to lay it out for the advantage of the necessitous. The poor are the treasures of the church."

J E R O M E .

THIS most learned of the Latin fathers (so called), the translator of the Vulgate, was a native of Dalmatia. He was born about A. D. 321, of a respectable Christian family. His father Eusebius was a man of wealth, but his mother's name is unknown. His father sent him to Rome for his education, where he studied under the learned Donatus, the philologist. At first he fell in with the current of follies and luxuries of the great city, but by the grace of God he was rescued from their power and received Christian baptism.

He visited Gaul, particularly Jocaes, soon after, to form the acquaintance of its best scholars. At Aquileia, in Italy, he formed a close friendship with Rufinus. Returning to Rome, he collected a large library of valuable books, both classical and theological; cultivating his literary taste by the former, and enriching his mind and heart from the latter, and particularly the sacred Scriptures. To this library he made constant additions, and from it he drew the knowledge on which his fame is built.

With his books and his friends, Evagrius, Heliodorus, and others, he went into the East, and was received by Theodorus into his monastery, near Antioch. Here he diligently studied the Hebrew language, afterwards so useful in his translation of the Bible. Three bishops were at the time contending for the See of Antioch, Meletius, and Paulinus. By the advice of Damesus,

Bishop of Rome, he was ordained presbyter by Paulinus, but on condition of his remaining a recluse.

After four years in Syria, he went to Constantinople to study theology with Gregory Nazianzen. In 382, he was called to Rome by Damasus, and made his secretary. On the death of Damasus, he was so annoyed by his enemies, that in 385 he returned to Syria with his younger brother Paulinianus, and two wealthy Roman ladies, Paula and her daughter, the virgin Eustochisem, and after visiting Antioch and Jerusalem, passed into Egypt. Here he made the acquaintance of Didymus of Alexandria, and afterwards of the monks of Istria. But of this famous monastery he says that he found there more of the poison of serpents than of the piety of saints, so that he returned in disgust to Palestine and settled in a convent at Bethlehem.

At Bethlehem Jerome composed most of his works. Here he gathered his friends around him, and though harassed often, and once in great danger from the burning of his monastery, he passed the residue of his life, dying in the year 420, in his 90th year.

The works of Jerome consist of the Vulgate, a revision or new translation of the Bible into Latin, adopted by the Roman Catholic Church as its standard; of commentaries on various books of the Old and New Testament, controversial tracts, epistles, and lives of the ecclesiastical writers before his time.

The piety of Jerome is not of the highest order. His temper is often bad, and his ascetic habits drove him into superstition and darkened his views of the gospel. His Life of St. Paul, the first hermit, and of Hilarion, also,

abound in the most absurd stories and “lying wonders” of that monkish age.

On the other hand, he has great merits as a translator and commentator of the Scripture. His comments are mostly literal and full of learning. As a letter-writer he is often admirable.

As a controversialist, he appears to less advantage. What he took up warmly he uttered vehemently. His zeal is without discrimination. He seems to be a systematic approver of whatever is established; now and then finding fault in detail with what he defended as a whole. He is very sensitive to opposition, and jealous of his reputation. In a word, he was “a bigot to existing institutions, a firm adherent to the ruling powers (especially at Rome), and a strenuous defender of received opinions.” His treatise against Vigilantius, the noble reformer of that corrupt age, is a disgrace to a Christian.



VIGILANTIUS.

THIS evangelical reformer, of the fourth century—this Protestant in the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church—was born about 364, in the Gallic village of Cabagorris, at the northern foot of the Pyrenees, on the great road leading from Aquitaine into Spain. His father was a man of wealth, which the son inherited.

His early education was neglected; but while yet a youth, he was converted by the influence of Sulpicius Severus, the Roman senator, poet and historian, who took him into his family, and gave him the united ad-

vantages of classical and Christian instruction. There he met the excellent Exaperius, bishop of Thoulouse, Paulinus, of Nola, and other distinguished men of the age. In 394, he visited Paulinus at Nola, and was received with much affection. Here he beheld the shrines of growing superstition, and Christian idolatry of saints and martyrs, and heard the wonderful stories of miracles wrought at their tombs. Yet here, too, he found the proper antidote, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

Soon after his return from Italy, he was ordained presbyter, probably by Exaperius, who always stood by him as a friend and protector. His father dying at this time, he came into possession of his property, and was thus enabled to gratify his wish to visit Syria, Palestine, and Jerusalem. He carried letters of introduction to Jerome, and spent some time with him at Bethlehem. Jerome, in his answer to the letter of Paulinus, calls him "the holy presbyter Vigilantius," soon after he had left for Egypt.

On his return to Europe in 398, it soon became manifest that the eyes of Vigilantius had been opened, by the grace of God, to perceive the deep-rooted evils in the Catholic Church, and to protest against them, in the name of his Divine Master. Among other things, says Mosheim, "he denied that the tombs and bones of the martyrs were worthy of any religious worship; and therefore censured pilgrimages to places accounted sacred. He ridiculed the miracles reported as occurring in the temples consecrated to martyrs, and condemned the practice of keeping vigils in these temples. He said that the custom of burning wax candles in the day-

time, at the sepulchres of the martyrs, was unwisely borrowed by Christians from the ancient superstitions of the Pagans; he maintained that prayers addressed to departed saints were fruitless; he treated with contempt the prevailing fasts, the celibacy of the clergy, and the monastic life; and he maintained that neither those who distribute all their goods amongst the poor and lived in voluntary poverty, nor those who sent portions of their property to Jerusalem, perform an act pleasing and acceptable to God."

To some of the Gallic and Spanish bishops, it appears that these just and scriptural sentiments of the reformer were not offensive. Indeed, there is ample evidence that they gave them a cordial welcome, and reduced them to practice within the next ten years. But all were not thus wise.

Liparius and Desiderius, presbyters in parishes adjoining that of Vigilantius, wrote to Jerome complaining of the influence of the reformer. They said that the whole vicinity was in commotion, that their own people were infected, and that many agreed with him in his blasphemies against the church; and they begged Jerome to refute him. To this appeal Jerome at once replied, endeavoring, as he said, to "crush the serpent." This was in 406; and the reply is couched in language that might put a heathen to the blush.

It is not at all likely that the reformer was convinced or silenced. The only light we have leads to the conclusion that he retired to Barcelona, in Spain, where he soon after died—slain, according to some, at the storming of that city by the Vandals.

But the word of truth did not perish. In the 9th cen-

tury, Jonas of Orleans, and Dangalus, Romish writers, affirm that the teaching of Vigilantius still found followers in the subalpine diocese of Claude, bishop of Turin; and they both attribute the iconoclastic proceedings of Claude to the example of Vigilantius. Modern Protestants, Faber, Jones, Gilles, and others, do not hesitate to trace, through him, the origin of the Waldenses.

AUGUSTINE.

THIS distinguished man, the brightest miracle of grace, and the profoundest divine of his age, was born in Tagasta, a town of Numidia, in North Africa, November 13, 354. His father Patricius, was poor but respectable; his mother Monica, was a model Christian wife and mother. She took care of his religious education from his birth, and put him at once among the catechumens, which was then the usual method of preparing all classes for faith and baptism.

In time he was sent to Madaura, for instruction in other useful learning; but even then took a dislike to the study of Greek literature, which he retained through life. From the age of fourteen to sixteen, when he lost his father, he spent his time in Carthage, in partial study and dissipations; mingling heathen authors with the sacred Scriptures in his reading, and making the categories of Aristotle the test of all truth. Unable to account for the origin of evil, at twenty, he fell into the Manichean errors, whose root lies in the assumption of two original and eternal principles, one good and the other

evil; who contend with each other for the mastery of the universe. His morals suffered with his mental aberrations. He had a mistress, and was a father at nineteen.

The tender mother, unable to check his wanderings, still watched over and earnestly prayed for her wayward son. The good bishop, whose efforts she besought to reclaim him to the truth, touched by her deep distress, said to her: "Continue your prayers. It is impossible that a son of so many tears should perish."

In 383, Augustine left Carthage for Rome. But failing to support himself there, as professor of eloquence, he proceeded to Milan. Here he became acquainted with Ambrose, the bishop of the Catholic church in that city, and by him was directed to the study of Paul's epistles. An ardent desire for the discovery of the truth now sprang up in his heart, and he now found that God alone is the effectual interpreter of his own word. To him he applied in earnest prayer, with humble confession of his sins, and at length received, through Christ, an answer of peace in his soul.

His conversion was a new era in his life. His doubts and his iniquities were removed, and at Easter, 386, he was baptized, together with his son Adeollatus, then thirteen years of age. His mother, who had followed him to Milan, was overjoyed at the blessed change, in which the prayers of her heart, for thirty-six years, were fulfilled. On the way back to Africa, he, however, lost his inestimable mother, who was indeed now ready to depart in the full triumph of faith.

Returning to his native city in Numidia, he retired, with a few friends, to an estate he had in the neighborhood, where he lived in the practice of works of piety,

and in the composition of several of his theological works, until 391. In that year, he visited the city of Hippo, in the hope of rendering spiritual benefit to an imperial officer, when the aged bishop Valerius, had him ordained as his assistant. Here he built a monastery for men, and a convent for women, of which last his sister became superior; thus showing that even his powerful mind did not rise above the prevailing superstition of the age. In 395, he was made associate bishop, and on the death of Valerius, sole bishop of Hippo, until his own death, 430, a period of thirty-five years, crowded with activity and energy. He was indefatigable in preaching, writing, combatting error and sin, and infusing life and spirituality into the churches and clergy of the Catholic church, far and near. From 412 to 428, he was deeply engaged in the controversy with the Pelagians, and strongly defended, by voice and pen, the doctrines of free grace and predestination. He sought most earnestly to win back the Donatists to the Catholic church; but finding argument and persuasion unavailing, he at length recommended coercive measures to the government, on the idea that it is better that the body should suffer than that the soul should be lost—a true principle, but entirely misapplied by the advocates of persecution, whether by an Augustine, a Bernard, or a Torquemada. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant.” “To his own Master he standeth or falleth.” “One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”

These disputes clouded the last days of Augustine. But his soul was still more distressed when the Vandals, under Genseric, desolated Africa, with fire and sword,

and the labors of his life seemed to be suddenly swept away. While the Vandals were besieging the city of Hippo, he was seized with a fever, and died, August 28, 430, in the 76th year of his age. But being dead, he yet speaks in his numerous writings, which handle almost every point in speculative, experimental, and practical religion, with profound thought and spiritual unction, if not always with the meekness of wisdom. No man did so much as he to promote infant baptism, and thus subvert the catechumenal system.

PATRICK,

CALLED THE APOSTLE TO THE IRISH.

THIS admirable man, around whom the Jesuits (in the *Acts Sanctorum**), have thrown the halo of Romish superstition, was born in Scotland, A.D. 379, at Bonaven, between Dumbarton and Glasgow. The region was then called Valentia, by the Romans, under whose rule Christianity had gained a firm footing. Patrick's original name was Sukkoth. He was the son of a poor deacon of the village church, and was religiously educated. Yet he felt no genuine love for religion till his 17th year.

At that time, he was taken captive by a band of marauders, from the north of Ireland, and sold there as a

* In the above work, the "Acts of the Saints," we find statements that directly *contradict* Patrick's, in his "Confessions." We, therefore, put little confidence in what that Jesuitical work says of his connection with Rome, although Rome has canonized him.

slave. Milcora, his master, set him to watch his cattle. His conversion is best told in his own words, taken from his *Confessions* :

“Thus God opened my unbelieving mind, so that, though late, I thought of my sins, and turned with my whole heart to the Lord my God, to him who looked down on my low condition, had pity on my youth and ignorance, and before I knew him, before I could distinguish good from evil, guarded, protected, and cherished me, as a father a son. This I certainly know, that before God humbled me, I was like a stone sunk in the mire; but when he came, who had power to do it, he raised me in his mercy, and put me in a very high place. Wherefore, I must testify aloud, in order to make some return to the Lord for such great blessings in time and eternity, which no human reason is able to estimate.”

After six years of captivity, he found means of escape, by a vessel sailing to his native land.

His rejoicing parents now hoped to retain him permanently with them, but God had other and nobler employment for him. His heart yearned over the poor heathen, in the land where he had been a captive, and as he had learned their Celtic language and customs, he was filled with prayerful longings to go among them as a missionary of the gospel of Christ.

But the times were not favorable to such efforts; neither was he properly qualified by education and training for the great work before him. He then sailed to Gaul, and entered the monastery of Marmontier, where he studied for three years. Thence he went into Italy, where he was detained many years longer.

At length, A.D. 432, the way was opened for him to

return to Scotland, and make his preparations for his great missionary work in Ireland. His friends and parents in vain sought to dissuade him. He himself says: "Many opposed my going, and said, behind my back: 'Why does this man rush into danger among the heathens, who do not know the Lord?' It was not badly intended on their part, but they could not comprehend the matter. It was not by my own power, but it was God that conquered in me, and withstood them all; so that I went to the people of Ireland, to publish the gospel to them, and suffered many insults from unbelievers, and many persecutions, even unto bonds, resigning my liberty for the good of others. And if I am found worthy, I am ready to give up my life, with joy, for his name's sake."

In this spirit, Patrick entered on his mission. He began his labors in Lagonica, and in 434, in Ultonica (or Ulster), not far from the city of Armagh, which henceforth became the centre of the Irish mission. All former efforts to introduce Christianity, particularly by Palladius, had failed. The country was badly cultivated. Fishing, the chase, and cattle-breeding, were the chief employments of the people. They carried on incessant wars, among the different tribes, with stones, spears, and ponderous battle-axes. They had but two arts—music and poetry, and the bards sung, to their unlettered hearers, the deeds of their barbarous heroes, thus continually inflaming their love of war. Like the Celtic tribes, they were worshippers of fire, and especially of the sun.

By the sound of a kettle-drum, Patrick called the people together, to tell them of the true God and the cruci-

fied Redeemer. But not without great opposition. The Celtic priests and bards, who had great influence on the superstitious people, stirred up many severe persecutions against him. But nothing could daunt his courage, or quench his glowing zeal. God was his refuge and strength. His faith, and patience, and fervent prayers prevailed, and by degrees he saw the work of the Lord extending on all sides, in the conversion of sinners.

One example of his success will suffice for illustration. In a family of rank, which had been converted and baptized, the son and heir became so attached to Patrick, and anxious to do good, that he forsook all his worldly prospects, and followed him everywhere, as his assistant in the spread of the gospel. From his friendly, gentle disposition, he received the name of Benignus, and his musical talents were of great service in singing Christian hymns among the people. On the death of Patrick, he succeeded him in his office.

With Christianity came letters, arts, social improvements, civilization. The influence of the Druids gradually declined, and persecution abating, Patrick, with his assistants, was able to pass around a great part of the island, gathering large assemblies, and reading to them the Scriptures, as the guide to eternal life. Churches were established, teachers and ministers ordained, and monastic schools founded for the instruction of the people; so that, within a single century, missionaries went forth from Ireland to evangelize Burgundy, Switzerland, and southern Germany.

Thus, for more than thirty years, did this noble missionary of the cross prosecute his labors. "Gladly," he says, "would I travel to my parents in my native land,

and also visit the brethren in Gaul, to see once more the faces of the saints of my Lord. God knows that I wish it very much. But I am bound by the Spirit, who testifies that he will pronounce me guilty, if I do this, and I dread lest the work I have begun, should fall to the ground."

Patrick sought to avoid even the semblance of acting for his own glory or profit. He often refused gifts that were urged on his acceptance, preferring rather to give than receive, and rendering to God all the glory of the wonderful works performed through his ministry. Thus, he says, in his Confessions, before cited: "He has called me by his Spirit to serve, though with fear and trembling, yet faithfully and blamelessly, the people to whom the love of Christ hath led me. I must bless my God exceedingly, who has kept me faithful in the day of trial, so that at this time, I can present my soul full of confidence, as a living thank-offering to my Lord Christ, who has rescued me from all my distresses, so that I am obliged to say: "Who am I, O! Lord, and what is my calling? Since thou hast so gloriously revealed thy divinity to me, that to-day I can continually rejoice among the heathen, and glorify thy name, wherever I am; not only in prosperity, but also in tribulation; so that whatever may befall me, I can receive evil or good with an equal mind, and must continually thank God, who has taught me to believe in him as eternal truth."

"May my God never suffer it that I should lose the church, which he has won in the most remote corner of the earth. I pray God that he would give me perseverance, and think me worthy to bear a faithful testimony, until the time of my departure. And if I have ever

striven to accomplish any thing for the sake of the God whom I love, I beseech him that I may be allowed to shed my blood for his name, with those of my new converts, who have been imprisoned, even though I should obtain no burial, or my body be torn in pieces by wild beasts."

Patrick lived until 465, perhaps longer, but the particulars of his death are unknown.

BENEDICT.

THIS celebrated reformer of monkery, and founder of the Benedictines, deserves notice for his vast influence over European society, through the monasteries and rules which he established. He was born at Nursia, in Italy, in 480, about the time that Patrick died in Ireland. At 14, he was sent to Rome, for education, but disgusted with its dissipation and its schools, he ran away, and hid himself in a cave, at Sublacum, for three years. When discovered there, his cell became a place of resort to the superstitious people.

He was soon chosen abbot of a monastery near by; but his rigid rule of discipline gave offence, and he returned to Sublacum, where many joined him. In 529 he had under his jurisdiction 12 cells, each containing 12 monks. Roman families placed their sons under him for instruction.

His reputation exciting jealousy in the local clergy, he now removed to Mount Cassino, 50 miles south, and about as far from Naples. Here he converted a body of

Pagan mountaineers, and turned their temple into a monastery, where he peacefully spent the rest of his life, dying in 543. His life was written by Pope Gregory the Great.

According to the rule of Benedict, the monks were to rise at 2 A.M., and repair to the place of worship for vigils, and then spend the remainder of the night in committing psalms, meditation and reading. At sunrise, they assembled for matins; then spent four hours in labor, and two in reading; then dined, and read in private, till 2½ P.M., when they met again for worship, and then labored till vespers. They went through the book of psalms every week. Their labor was in gardening, agriculture, and mechanical trades; and each was put to such labor as the superior saw fit. Personal liberty was renounced, all property surrendered, and chastity pledged by perpetual vows. Each had his daily rations of food; but no meat was allowed at the public table, nor any conversation. One read aloud, while the rest were eating. They all served as cooks and waiters by turns, a week at a time. Their clothing was coarse and simple. They slept in common dormitories of 10 or 20, in separate beds, without undressing. An inspector slept in each dormitory, with a light burning. No conversation was allowed after they retired to rest. No one could receive a present, or hold a correspondence except under the inspection of the abbot. No stranger was admitted, without leave from him, and no monk could go out, but by his permission. The school for children was kept without the walls.

The abbot was elected by common suffrage, but his power was despotic, and was regarded as the will of God.

He had under him a prior or deputy, a steward, a superintendent of the sick, an attendant on visitors, a porter, and other assistants, including deans, or inspectors of ten; all of whom he appointed or removed at pleasure. On great occasions, he summoned the whole brotherhood in council; at ordinary times, only the seniors: but after hearing them, he decided for himself.

A probation of 12 months was assigned to every applicant for admission; when, if approved, he took the three solemn and irrevocable vows of perfect chastity, absolute poverty, and implicit obedience to the will of the superior. For light offences, he was liable to reprimand; for grave ones, to loss of privileges, or expulsion; though the way was open for his return through repentance.

The modern Benedictines admit that they do not observe fully the rigorous rule of the order. But they claim that they keep the essential part, *i. e.*, the three vows. The immense wealth they have acquired, they say is consistent with the vow of poverty, because it belongs to the order, not to themselves; yet they luxuriously enjoy it. Such is human nature.

The first Benedictines were pious and useful Christians. Their order spread over Europe, and, in time, absorbed all others. They converted the wilderness into a fruitful country. They supplied missionaries to barbarous Pagan tribes. They collected libraries, preserved learning, educated youth, and trained able men for every department of state, of the church, and of society.

But, as Neander justly observes, a system which prescribes as its aim, that "men should always be depend-

ant on the mouth of another," is contrary to the spirit and genius of Christianity, which teaches man to depend only on the mouth of God. It is always a perilous matter to attempt to break the will of man, by the strict discipline that was employed in the monasteries; for the human will can only be truly subjected and transformed by the power of God, by the might of love. Self-will will react in pride, or sink into servility, under the false grace of Christian humility.

What Anselm of Canterbury, at the end of the 11th century, said against the rigid monastic discipline, is admirable. An abbot complained to him of the incorrigible youths, who would not be amended by all the correction he administered. Anselm replied:

"You never cease beating the boys, and what sort of men will they be, when they grow up?"

"Stupid and brutish," answered the abbot.

"A good sign for your method of education! when you educate them into brutes."

"Is that our fault? We try to compel them in all manner of ways to be better, and effect nothing."

"You compel them! Tell me, then, I pray you, if you planted a tree in your garden, and enclosed it on all sides, so that it could not spread out its branches in any direction, and after some years, transplant it in an open space, what kind of a tree would it become? Certainly, a useless one, with crooked, tangled branches. And whose fault would it be but yours, who trained the tree in this over-compulsory manner?"

COLUMBAN.

COLUMBAN, an eminent Irish monk and missionary, was born in Leinster, Ireland, in 559. After a good education in the literature of that age, he entered the famous monastery of Bangor, in the north-east, near Carrickfergus, under Clongal, who, it is said, had 3,000 monks under his jurisdiction. These seem to have been refugees from the great monastery of Bangor, in Wales, who carried with them to Ireland their cherished name, as did the Pilgrim Fathers to Plymouth, in this country. The supposition is natural, and clears up many difficulties.

In 589, his heart was moved to go forth as a missionary to the heathen, who had overrun the ancient seats of Christianity, in Gaul and Burgundy. Taking with him 12 companions, with the permission of Clongal, he set forth, and passing through England and Gaul, settled in Burgundy, near the Lucerne, where he built, in the wilderness, the monasteries of Augsley, Fontenay, and Lieuxiel, and lived and labored for 20 years, with great success.

In 610, his faithful reproof gave offence to king Theodoric, and he was banished from the territory. After wandering some time along the Rhine, and spending three years in Switzerland, he went into Italy. Here he was kindly received by the Lombard king, Agidulph, and founded the famous monastery of Bobbio, near Pavia, but after presiding over it one year, he died, in 615.

Columban was a man of superior genius and exalted piety, and possessed vast influence in his own age. In his correspondence with Gregory the Great, he urged reform on the Papal see. His works are his monuments. In his instructions to his monks, he says many admirable things, which show the genuine Christian spirit, working through methods we cannot altogether approve: "Whoever overcomes himself, treads the world under foot. No one who spares himself can hate the world. We must willingly surrender, for Christ's sake, what we love out of Christ. Let us be Christ's, not our own; we are bought at a dear price: truly so, for the master gave himself for the servant, the king for his attendants, God for man."

CONSTANTINE SYLVANUS.

THIS eminent reformer, of the Eastern empire, was born at Maunenalis, in Syria, about 630. From the accounts of his enemies, Photius and Peter Liculeis, both of whom vainly attempt to confound him and his followers with the old Manichees, we gather the following interesting facts:

His conversion was owing to the gift of a New Testament, from a deacon, a stranger, whom he had entertained one night in his house, in 660. At that time, few could read, the Scriptures were rare, and not in the hands of the common people. Constantine made the best use of the precious gift of the stranger. He studied the New Testament with unwearied assiduity and prayer, more especially the writings of the apostle Paul. "What-

ever might be his success," says Gibbon, "a Protestant will applaud the spirit of his inquiry."

The saving knowledge which Constantine, under the divine blessing, attained, he gladly communicated to others. A church of believers arose, among whom several were qualified for the work of the ministry. Other churches were collected, and formed after the model of primitive Christianity. They spread through Armenia, and Cappadocia, and Pontus.

The Catholic hierarchy was alarmed. They branded them as heretics and Manichees. But, as Gibbon observes, "they sincerely condemned the memory and doctrines of the Manichee sect, and complained of the injustice that impressed that invidious name on them." It is not improbable that they adopted the name of Paulicians, to indicate their attachment to the writings of that eminent apostle. Certain it is, that they delighted in scriptural names. Constantine called himself Sylvanus; his fellow laborers were called Titus, Tychicus, Timothy, and so on, and their churches were named after those of the New Testament, without regard to the names of the places where they were formed, or assembled for worship.

The labors of Constantine (Sylvanus) were crowned with wonderful success. Asia Minor, once renowned for Christian piety, was again illuminated with the light of the gospel. He himself resided in Colonia, in Pontus. "The Paulician teachers," says Gibbon, "were distinguished only by their scriptural names; by the modest title of fellow pilgrims; by the sanctity of their lives, their zeal and knowledge, and the credit of some extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit. But they were inca-

pable of desiring, or at least of obtaining, the wealth and honors of the Catholic prelacy. Such anti-Christian pride they strongly censured."

Roused by the growing importance of the sect, the Greek emperors began to persecute the Paulicians with the most sanguinary severity. Those humble Christians, whose only crime was their Scriptural purity and simplicity, were capitally punished, their books seized and committed to the flames, and, if any one was found to have secreted them, he was put to death and his property confiscated.

A Greek officer, armed with legal and military power, appeared at Colonia, to strike the shepherd, and recover the lost sheep to the Catholic fold. "By a refinement of cruelty, this officer (Simeon) placed the unfortunate Sylvanus before a line of his disciples, who were commanded, as the price of their own pardon and the proof of their repentance, to massacre their spiritual father. They turned aside from the impious offer; the stones dropt from their filial hands; and of the whole number, only one executioner could be found. This apostate stoned to death the father of the Paulicians, who had now labored among them for twenty-seven years." Simeon himself, struck with the evidence of divine grace in the sufferers, embraced the faith which he came to destroy, resigned his honors and fortune, became a zealous preacher, and sealed his testimony with his blood.

For centuries afterward, the successors of the primitive Christians continued to diffuse their light and shed their blood in its defence. In 855, the emperor Theodorus resolved to exterminate them, and is computed to

have killed, by the gibbet, fire and sword, one hundred thousand persons.

But the reformatory movement was of God, and persecution could not stop it. Providence favored it. In order to check it in Armenia, the Greek emperors, in 750, and again in 970, removed large colonies of the Paulicians across the Hellespont into Thrace. These exiles from Asia, with a zeal which no hardships could repress, diffused their evangelical doctrines in Thrace, and converted their northern neighbors, the Bulgarians and Slavonians, on the lower Danube. Bulgaria became the chief seat of their powerful churches. Persecution, war, trade, co-operated with their missionary enterprise. They gradually spread themselves over all Europe. Through Macedonia, Epirus, Sicily, Lombardy, they penetrated France, Spain, Germany, England. In 1017, by order of the Council of Orleans, the Paulician missionaries, with their converts, including several of the Catholic clergy, were burnt alive. A few years later they were found in Swabia, and spread through Germany, under the name of Cathari, or the Pure ; a name which points out their connection with the Novatians of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, and supplies an important link in church history. In Italy they were called also Paterics, or Sufferers, as well as Cathari. The clergy heaped all sorts of calumnies upon their pure principles, in order to crush them, as off-shoots of the Gnostics and Manicheans. Even Mosheim and Neander have been so far imposed on by these calumnies, as to admit that they were tainted with those ancient heresies. But, whatever may be true of individuals found among them, it is not true of them, and the false

accusation should be dismissed as unworthy of the slightest credit in reference to the general body of the Paulicians. The two sets of principles cannot coalesce; and the Paulicians themselves constantly and indignantly repelled the calumny, and easily mingled with the evangelical Waldenses and Albigenses of the twelfth century.

PETER WALDO.

Two eminent reformers of the name of Peter, appear in the south of France in the twelfth century. They were men of the same principles and spirit, and belong to the same great evangelical movement. Peter de Bruges is the first in the movement, and, according to Gaselos, he began his work as early as A.D., 1102. He was a learned presbyter in the Catholic Church, who, like Vigilantius, seven hundred years earlier, began his work without separation from the church, but protesting against the corruptions which he saw festering in her bosom. He did not leave her communion before 1110. His labors were crowned with abundant success, in the conversion of great numbers to a true faith in Christ, throughout Provence and Languedoc; until the populace of St. Giles, stimulated by the clergy, burnt him to death in 1130. But the truth was not consumed, and the work of God went on. Henry, Joseph, Arnold of Brescia, caught up, in succession, the torch of saving truth, and held it before the eyes of an awakening people.

Peter Waldo, a rich merchant of Lyons, in 1160, was

among the converts, who greatly contributed to the spread of the work. His exemplary life, his zeal in the cause of truth and holiness, his noble sacrifices, and, above all, his consecration of wealth and learning to give the people the Scriptures in their own language (the Provencal French), deserve perpetual remembrance.

An affecting Providence was the immediate occasion of awakening his own soul to the "one thing needful." One evening, after supper, as he sat conversing with a party of his friends, one of them, particularly dear to him, suddenly dropt dead on the floor. The lesson of that awful hour was brought home to his heart. In the Scriptures he sought and found the great salvation of which all are in need.

The Latin Vulgate Bible was then the only version in Europe, and not one in a hundred could read it. Waldo determined to give others access to the treasures which had enriched his own soul. He was himself a man of learning, and, with the assistance of others, he translated the whole Bible, and circulated it in innumerable copies among his fellow-countrymen. This was the first modern version into the languages of Europe, and it was to the people like life from the dead. The demand grew with the supply, and the divine seed was planted wherever the beautiful language, then the most highly cultivated in Europe, the language of the Troubadours, was either spoken or read.

The rage of the godless clergy knew no bounds. They called on the great St. Bernard, to stay, by voice and pen, the spreading plague of heresy, for so they called it. But, though he essayed, like Balaam, to

curse, his concessions to their learning and piety turned the curse into blessing.

Again persecution was invoked. The bishops breathed nothing but vengeance. From the Rhone to the Rhine, all France and Germany were in commotion. Thirty-five citizens of Mentz were burned in one fire, for the love of God's word. In Strasburg, where Waldo himself narrowly escaped, eighty persons were committed to the flames. Multitudes died, as in the early times, praising God that they were counted worthy to die for the truth. Council after council was called to condemn them; and twenty years after Waldo had been driven from Lyons to the north of Europe, Pope Lucius III. issued a fiery decree for their destruction, in which he included, with "the poor men of Lyons," all the Cathari, Paterines, Passigneers, Josephists, Arnoldists, and other "enemies of the Catholic faith," under "a perpetual anathema;" and enjoined upon all the secular powers of Europe to unite for their utter extermination.

The Albigenses and the Waldenses are essentially the same people, though often distinguishable. It was to crush the former, sixteen crusades, from 1208 to 1224, swept over southern France, and the terrible Inquisition was first established



JOHN WICKLIFFE.

THIS great man, the first of the English Reformers, was born in Richmond in 1324. He was educated at Baliol college, Oxford, and during his long residence

there acquired the reputation of extraordinary talents, piety and scholarship. In 1361 he was chosen master of his college, and made rector of Fylingham, in Lincolnshire. In 1363, he was appointed professor of theology in the university. From that date, his public activity as a reformer begins—nine years earlier than is commonly supposed, or stated by his biographers.

From 1363 to 1384, twenty-one years, through the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II., the reforming labors of Wickliffe were incessant, partly by his university lectures, and partly by his personal preaching, by his numerous publications, by his employment of a large body of pious and faithful men, under the name of “Simple Priests,” to preach in all the villages of the kingdom; and lastly by the most important work of his life, the TRANSLATION OF THE WHOLE BIBLE INTO THE ENGLISH TONGUE. This last has been justly pronounced the greatest event in Anglo-Saxon history.

The modern power of the press was then unknown. But he was for years surrounded by a band of active copyists and itinerants, through whom his writings and translations were widely diffused, notwithstanding all the efforts of his enemies. He never formally left the Church of Rome; but the light and power of God’s word gradually expelled his own darkness, and he followed Christ in that growing light, fearless of all dangers. So unsparing was his exposure of the corruptions of the Romish system, that he was repeatedly condemned as a heretic, by the clergy, and the Pope at their head; and would have been sacrificed as a martyr, but for the protection of the Duke of Lancaster and other powerful friends at

the English court, and by other providential interposition.

He was driven from the University of Oxford, in 1382, and spent the last three years of his life in his rectory at Sutterworth, where his translation of the Bible was completed and the last and best of his theological writings were produced. He saw that time was short, and he made the most of it for his Divine Master and the souls of men. Before his enemies were able to strike the long meditated blow, he was peacefully released from earth, and taken forever beyond their reach.

Wickliffe advocated general principles entirely subversive of the Papal system, and which have since become the standard principles of Protestantism; such as the absolute supremacy of the Scriptures; the right of all men to read it for themselves; and that no doctrine or ceremony is to be received in the church which is not sanctioned by the word of God. "Wise men," he said, "leave that as impertinent which is not plainly expressed in Scripture." On this ground he rejected the authority of the Catholic Church over the individual conscience; the efficacy of baptism to wash away sin; and the perdition of unbaptized infants on which that supposed efficacy rested.

The effect of his translation of the Bible and of his other writings was prodigiously great. It is said that one half of the English nation embraced his views. On the continent of Europe, especially in Bohemia, his influence spread with resistless force. The Council of Constance, in 1415, not only condemned his books, but, with impotent malice, ordered his very bones to be dug up and publicly burned to ashes. But, as the historian

Fuller observes, "The river Swink conveyed his ashes into the Avon, Avon into the Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they to the main ocean, that thus they are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

JOHN HUSS.

THIS distinguished man was born at Hussirez, in Bohemia, in 1373. He was educated at the University of Prague, then in its greatest glory, having, it is said, twenty thousand students. Among these he was distinguished for his talents and industry. In 1398, he began to deliver public philosophical and theological lectures, and was made Professor of Theology in the University. In 1402, he was made preacher at the Bethlehem Chapel, in Prague, and thus acquired an influence over the people as well as the students. Soon after, as confessor of Queen Sophia, he gained access to the court of King Wenalaus.

It was at this time that Huss became acquainted with the writings of Wickliffe, which the queen and her attendants had brought from England. His knowledge of the Scriptures soon made him feel the power of the bold English Reformer, and he became in his turn the boldest advocate of a radical reform, which should restore the whole church to scriptural purity and simplicity.

A terrible commotion followed. About five thousand, including professors and students from Germany, left

the University; but the Bohemians adhered to him. In consequence of the papal schism, the nobility and people favored the anti-papal spirit of his teachings. Huss preached against papal indulgences, masses for the dead, image worship, monastic life, set fasts, auricular confession, etc., declaring them, one and all, to be the arbitrary inventions of spiritual despotism. To withhold the cup from the laity, he also denounced as unscriptural.

Alexander V., the new Pope, finally summoned him. He refused to go. Schynke, archbishop of Prague, then prosecuted the preacher of scriptural truth, and, on search, two hundred volumes of Wickliffe's writings being found, were burned. Huss repaired to his native place, where he was protected by the Lord of Hussirez, Nicholas Here, preached with success, and wrote his most valuable works, those on the Six Errors, and on The Church, in which he denounces the Pope, saints, transubstantiation, priestly absolution, unconditional submission to human authority; and proclaiming the Scriptures as the only rule in matters of religion.

In 1414, being summoned before the Council of Constance to defend his opinions, and under a safe-conduct from the Emperor Sigismund, he appeared before that body. In spite of the emperor's safe conduct, he was treated as a prisoner. The emperor ordered his liberation, but was told that as a layman he could not interfere in such matters, and that a promise made to a heretic is not binding.

At a public examination, June 5, 1415, the leading men of the Council interrupted his defence by loud and

vehement outcries. On the 7th, he defended himself at greater length, in the presence of the emperor. But his grounds of defence were disregarded, and he was given the single alternative of an unconditional recantation or death. July 6th, he was heard for the last time, and then the sentence of death was pronounced on him for his obstinacy! Huss reminded the emperor of his safe-conduct. Sigismund blushed, but was silent.

Thus, without being convicted of any error, and in defiance of the word, both of God and man, John Huss was that very day hurried to the stake, where he was burnt alive, and his ashes thrown into the Rhine. In the midst of joyful prayers he gave up his soul to God. Even his enemies were struck with admiration at his behavior; and Bohemia, thrilled with horror at the injustice and perfidy of the Council and the emperor, took up arms to avenge his death. A civil war, of a terrible character and of fifteen years' continuance, ensued, and as if to manifest the wrath of Heaven upon the hypocrisy and cruelty of Rome.



MARTIN LUTHER.

THE name of Luther marks a great epoch in the history of Europe, and of the world. It was he who was chosen by Providence to accomplish that liberation of the human mind from the thralldom which had bound it for a thousand years, under the dominion of a despotic superstition, against which the noble struggles of so many

reformers had been carried on, with little or no success. Vigilantius, Constantine Sylvanus, Peter de Bruys, and Waldo, Wickliffe, and Huss, had not lived or died in vain. But they lacked one grand instrument of success, which was enjoyed by Martin Luther—the Printing Press. This new power changed the balance of forces in the moral world; and gave to Truth a sort of omnipresence in the conflict with hoary Tradition, and organized, hierarchical, world-wide persecution.

The principal facts in the life of Luther are well known. We can only rapidly sketch them here. He was born in 1483, at Eisleben, of humble but respectable parentage. He was religiously brought up, and, at 14, was sent to school, at Magdeburg, and then to Eisenach, where, like other poor scholars, he earned a scanty support, by singing songs at the doors of the street. He made rapid progress in study, and, in 1501, entered the university at Erfurt. In 1503, he became a public lecturer on Aristotle, but, at this time, made the grand discovery of a Latin Bible in the library—an event which shaped the whole course of his future life.

The sudden death of his friend, Alexis, brought home to his heart the lessons of the Bible; and he gave up his intended study of the law, for the study of theology. He even entered an Augustine monastery, that he might exclusively devote himself to religion. But he found, by experience, that no seclusion from the world, nor severity of ritual exercises, can give peace to the conscience, or purity to the heart. In a word, under divine teaching, he began to understand the gospel, and to grasp the great life-principle of true reformation—the doctrine

of justification by faith alone, in the sight of God. Filled with this, the joy of the Lord became his strength.

Still Luther was a devout Romanist, and a monk. When he visited Rome, on the business of his order, 1510, he climbed the steps of St. Peter on his knees. But before he left the city, his eyes were opened to the hollowness and hypocrisy of the court of Rome, under Leo X., and he returned thoroughly disgusted.

In 1508, he had been made professor of philosophy, in the new university of Wittenburg, and in 1512, he was appointed professor of theology. In this new sphere, all his peculiar powers were unfolded, under the solemn conviction that his oath of office bound him to the fearless defence of the holy Scriptures. His intimate acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew languages, the classics, the fathers, the scholastic philosophy and theology, with the fame of his eloquence, spread his name over Europe, and roused general attention to the new light which was breaking on his mind, from the study of the Scriptures.

In 1517, October 31, Luther nailed his 95 propositions against the sale of indulgences, to the door of the church in Wittenberg. They were pronounced heretical, as soon as they appeared. He was attacked by Dr. Eck, and others, but stood calm and firm in the love of the truth. He was summoned to Rome, but did not obey. He was tried by mild appeals from cardinal Cajetan, and the Pope's nuncio, Miltitz, and by alluring offers from the Pope himself, to induce him to recant, but in vain.

In 1520, Luther and his followers were excommuni-

cated, and his writings burnt at Rome. He retaliated, by burning the Pope's bull at Wittenberg, December 10, 1520, and by this act dissolved all connection with the Pope and Church of Rome. His friends besought him not to brave the hierarchy, but he committed himself to the protection of God. In 1521, he went to the Diet of Worms, replying to the warnings of Spalatin: "If there were as many devils in Worms, as there are tiles upon the roofs of the houses, I would go on." There, before the imperial assembly, he defended himself in a speech of two hours, concluding with the memorable words: "Let me then be refuted and convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures, or by the clearest arguments; otherwise I cannot, and will not, retract; for it is neither safe nor expedient to act against conscience. Here I take my stand; I can do no otherwise, so help me, God! Amen."

Luther left Worms with the glory of a conqueror. The people everywhere received the words of a monk, who defied at once the Pope and the clergy, the emperor and the princes. His enemies laid plots for his life. He was carried off by his friends to the fortress of Wartburg, and there translated the New Testament into German.

In March, 1522, he returned to Wittenberg, and by his wisdom and moderation, calmed the disturbances there, by Carlstadt. Only when he thought the vital truths of the gospel in danger, was he violent; but unfortunately he regarded his doctrine of consubstantiation (the real presence of Christ in the Lord's supper), in that light.

In 1525, less from inclination than from principle, he married the nun Catharine von Bom, who had escaped from her convent. His design was, to restore ministers of the gospel to their social rights and duties, and destroy monkery. The marriage, however, was a happy one.

After the Confession of Augsburg, 1530, the Reformation spread rapidly. But it required invincible firmness to maintain the victory he had won, against the weakness of friends, and the arts of his foes. He says: "I was born to fight with devils and factions. This is the reason my books are so boisterous and stormy. Let me rather speak the truth with too great severity, than once to act the hypocrite, and conceal the truth."

In 1534, this indefatigable man completed the translation of the whole Bible into German. This is his immortal work. His other writings fill 60 volumes. Few men have labored, prayed, or written so much. Few have better served God and man. At length, worn out with anxiety and toil, he quietly entered into rest, February 18th, 1546, aged 63, but, like the setting sun, "leaving the world all light, all on fire, with the potent contact of his own spirit."

JOHN CALVIN.

THIS second great reformer of the sixteenth century, was the son of a poor but pious cooper named Chuavin, of which Calvin is the Latinized form. He was born at Noyon, Picardy, in the north of France, July 10th.

1509. He was indebted to the kindness of friends for the advantages of a liberal education at Paris. Through Olivetan he received the first germ of the reformed doctrine; and giving up the Roman church, in which he held a curacy, he turned to the study of law at the age of twenty, at the same time acquiring Greek under Volmar, a friend of the new doctrine.

In 1533 he was obliged to flee from Paris, finding refuge with Du Tillot, a canon of Angoulem. Here he began to prepare his famous Institutes of the Christian Religion, which appeared two years later, and may be called the first Protestant system of theology. It was dedicated to Francis I., in the hope of checking the persecution of the Protestants in France. But in this object it failed. Margaret, sister of Francis I., and Queen of Navarre, received him for a time, and at her court he found many scholars who afterwards were useful to his party. His Institutes were published at Basle, Switzerland, in 1534, in which he seeks to show that the French Protestants were neither Lutherans nor Anabaptists, with whom they were confounded by the Catholics. His distinguishing doctrines, are divine predestination, total depravity of man, particular redemption, efficacious grace, and the final perseverance of saints. He allows no other sacraments than baptism and the Lord's supper; and in the last, rejects Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation, and, after some hesitation, adopts the simple typical view of Zwingli. He sweeps away all the saints and festivals of Popery, rejects purgatory, and calls the mass a profanation. In church government he established Presbyterian order; all pastors are equal; lay elders form part of the consistory;

and all are elected by the people, who through them are represented in the synod or general assembly. Thus many elements of primitive freedom were restored; but the union of the church with the State, and the control of religion by the magistrates, was the sacrifice of church independence, and the source of much persecution. Absolute religious liberty, such as is enjoyed in the United States, was not understood by Calvin; it was regarded as the error of the Anabaptists.

After visiting Italy awhile, Calvin again returned to Paris. But, finding his life was not safe there, he left it for Strasburg, in Switzerland; but in passing through Geneva, he was detained there by Farel, and united with him in organizing and perfecting the reformation in that city, in 1536.

The application of the strict discipline of the consistory, in 1538, led to his expulsion for a time, and he went on to Strasburg, where he married and settled. He labored here with Bucer, and grew daily in the public esteem, till he was earnestly recalled to Geneva. In this latter city, which now fully accepted his doctrine and discipline, Calvin spent the remainder of his life. Though of a slender constitution, and subject to frequent sickness, he accomplished a prodigious amount of work. Among his numerous writings, which fill forty volumes, his commentaries on the Scriptures are of surpassing worth. As a clear, logical, profound interpreter, perhaps Calvin was never excelled. He died in 1564, in his fifty-fifth year.

To train an able ministry, Calvin founded the academy or university of Geneva, over which his friend Theodore Beza so long and so ably presided. But, after

two centuries, it fell under Socinian influence, owing chiefly to the union of the church with the State. In 1832, an evangelical seminary was established on the voluntary principle, where the excellent D'Aubigne now presides.

The followers of Calvin in Europe (since 1561) are called the Reformed, to distinguish them from the Lutherans.

HISTORY OF THE JEWS.

THE term *Jews*, in its widest acceptation, is synonymous with *Hebrews*, or Israelites ; but in a more restricted sense, it means the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judea, as it existed in the times of our Saviour. The history of this people previous to that time is contained in the Old Testament, and in Josephus. Their great ancestor, Abraham, called "The Hebrew," by birth a Chaldean, emigrated about 1921 B. C., with his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and his numerous servants and flocks, into the land of Canaan, where he settled. Here Isaac his son was born, from whom the Hebrews are descended.

Abraham's elder son, Ishmael, whose mother was an Egyptian slave, settled in Arabia. Isaac married Rebecca, by whom he had two sons, Esau and Jacob, the former of whom sold his birthright to the latter. Jacob, surnamed Israel, or "The Strong," had twelve sons, namely : Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphthali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, and Benjamin. From these were descended the Twelve Tribes of Israel, or the Hebrews.

One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, came by a singular course of vicissitudes, to be prime minister to one of the

Pharaoh kings of Egypt, and he settled his brethren in a fertile district of that country, where their descendants multiplied, till in two centuries they formed a numerous colony, subject to the Egyptians, by whom they were disliked as aliens, and treated with great harshness. Being driven to despair, they found a leader in Moses, who, acting under the special direction of God, led them out of Egypt, to return to Canaan the possession which God had promised to Abraham. The number of Israelites who left Egypt is stated, in Exodus xii. 37, at six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, with their flocks and herds of cattle. Being pursued by the Egyptians, they crossed the Red sea, whose waters, at the command of the Lord, divided and gave them a passage on dry land; but returned at the same moment, and overwhelmed their pursuers. (B. C., 1491.)

On Mount Sinai, Moses received from God the law of the Ten Commandments; and from that time the Israelites were taught to consider themselves as being under the immediate government of the Deity, the Divine will being revealed to them by their leader Moses. The books of Moses, called *Exodus* and *Leviticus*, contain the civil laws and social regulations, as well as the religious rites and ceremonies. Other laws, which were successively promulgated, are found in the following books of *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*, so as to form a complete body of institutions for the Hebrew nation. Of these laws, some were temporary directions, suited only to the nomadic state in which the Israelites spent many years in the wilderness; others are enactments intended for an agricultural people, with settled habitations, and

for the time when they should become possessed of the promised land of Canaan.

Sanitary regulations concerning diet, cleanliness, and decency, form an important part of the code, and are admirably adapted to the people, country, and climate for which they were intended. The political system was founded upon equality, without any distinction of castes; and the whole nation was to be one body of husbandmen, cultivating their own property. The land could not be alienated, in perpetuity; every fiftieth year a jubilee was to take place, when all estates which had been alienated were to revert to their original owners, and all burdens, debts and other engagements, were to cease.

One tribe, the descendants of Levi, was set apart for religious service. They had no tract of country assigned to them, but were to dwell by themselves in separate towns or villages scattered through the territory of the other tribes. Out of this class the officiating priesthood was chosen, as well as the scribes and keepers of records, the judges, and perhaps also the physicians. They were in fact the learned class of the nation; they read the Law to the people, and they attended by rotation on the officiating priests in the Tabernacle. One tenth of the whole produce of the land possessed by the other tribes was assigned to the Levites for their maintenance.

Each tribe had its own chieftain or prince, and the heads or elders of each family constituted the provincial assembly. On occasions of great emergency, national assemblies were held, probably consisting of delegates from each tribe; and their resolutions were ratified by the general voice of the people expressed by acclama-

tion. This took place repeatedly during their encampment in the desert. All who could bear arms, were bound to fight in the common defence. The penal laws were severe, but considerate; punishments were fixed for every offence; nothing was left to caprice. Parental authority was enforced, but the law prevented its abuse; the father had no power of death over his children, and he could not disinherit them; the first-born received two portions, and the rest shared equally.

No Hebrew could be sold, or sell himself as a bondsman for life; he might hire himself for a servant for a period, but at the end of six years he became free again, unless he chose to renew his term for another six years. Foreign slaves, however, whether captives or purchased, with their own consent might be held in perpetual bondage, both they and their children; but the law provided for their protection: they were entitled to rest on the Sabbath; and on the great festivals they partook of the common feasts and rejoicings. The condition of a slave among the Hebrews was better than that of a slave among the Romans and most other nations of antiquity. For further details concerning the constitution of the Hebrews, the reader is referred to "The Pentateuch," especially to the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The office of high-priest was bestowed upon Aaron, the brother of Moses, and his descendants in perpetuity. This dignity was quite distinct from that of civil leader or judge, though in course of time, some high-priests occasionally united both offices in their persons. The high-priest was the means of communication between God and the people; he alone could enter the recess of the Sanctuary. In important cases there was a final

appeal to him, and he was also consulted upon great national affairs. He had the charge of the Tabernacle or Sanctuary, which was the great bond of union among the Tribes of Israel.*

After remaining about a year encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, the Israelites marched toward the land of Canaan, and arrived at Kadesh-Barnea, on its southern frontier, whence they sent spies to explore the interior. After forty days the spies returned, with the information that the country was rich and fertile, but the people fierce, numerous, and strong, and likely to make a stout resistance. The Israelites, long accustomed to bondage, were frightened, and they loudly demanded to be led back to Egypt.

Moses saw that the people were as yet unfit for a war of conquest, and, on the authority of God, he gave the order for retreat, not, however, for Egypt, but back into the peninsula of Sinai, where they encamped, and settled with their flocks and cattle, after the fashion of the Bedouin Arabs. In this wilderness they remained for thirty-eight years, the period assigned for their nomade life, until the first generation which had come out of Egypt had gradually sunk into the grave, and a new race had sprung up in the free air of the desert, trained to the bold and hardy habits of the wandering Arab, but with much of the arts, knowledge, and discipline derived from Egypt.

At the expiration of this time, they again moved forward to Kadesh; but Moses perceiving that part of the

* The whole Hebrew system of Priesthood and Sacrifice was temporary, and typical of the one great eternal redemption by Christ. See the Epistle to the Hebrews.

country to be mountainous and well defended, led them round the eastern shore of the Dead sea, through the lands of Edom and Moab. He crossed the Jabbok, defeated the Amorites and the king of Bashan, and encamped in a plain near the left bank of the Jordan, above its influx into the Dead sea, nearly opposite to Jericho.

Here, after defeating the Midianites, and giving the conquered country on the west of Jordan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, he prepared to lead the Israelites across the river. But before this was effected Moses died, after bestowing his last advice and blessing on the people, assembled for the purpose, and appointing Joshua, a man already tried for his bravery and skill, to be his successor.

Joshua crossed the Jordan and took Jericho, and gradually conquered the greater part of Canaan, exterminating or driving away the former inhabitants.* The events of this conquest are related in the book of Joshua. The country was then divided among the twelve tribes, substituting for those of Levi and Joseph, the respective descendants of the two sons of the latter, Manasseh and Ephraim.

In this manner the Hebrews became a settled agricultural people, though often at war with their neighbors, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Midianites, the Am-

* This was done under a special, divine commission, and expressly as a punishment for inveterate iniquity. Had the Almighty employed the pestilence, or famine, or fire from heaven to destroy the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, it would have been no more directly his own hand of judgment than in employing the arms of Israel, while the moral effect of the latter course was even greater : for he assured the Israelites that if they practiced the same iniquities, their doom should be the same.

monites, and other tribes. Even the whole land of Canaan was not subdued till a much later period, and the Canaanites remained in strength both in the north and south, and repeatedly harassed the Hebrew colonists, as we observe in the invasion of Sisera. On these occasions gallant leaders arose among the Hebrews, styled Sophitim in the Scriptures, generally translated judges, who assumed a sort of dictatorial authority, and rescued the nation from danger: each tribe, however, retained its internal form of government, and often engaged in petty warfare with its neighbors on its own account. This period of the history of the Jews, which is called the period of the Judges, and which lasted four centuries, may be considered as the heroic age of the nation, which still retained a primitive simplicity of manners, beautifully portrayed in the tale of Ruth.

Samuel was the last of the Judges. He drove away the Philistines, who had occupied a great part of the country; but the people growing tired of these frequent invasions, which they had not discipline or union enough among themselves to guard against, wished for a more consolidated form of government, and demanded of Samuel a king to rule over them. Samuel remonstrated on the dangers of despotism; but the people were determined in favor of the change, and Samuel appointed a youth named Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, and anointing him, solemnly gave up the authority into his hands.

The reign of Saul was long and agitated. He quarreled with Samuel, and committed various acts of tyranny. Samuel then foretold the downfall of the house of Saul, and secretly anointed, as his successor, a youth of the tribe of Judah, called David, who was

distinguished for his bravery, as well as for the comeliness of his person. Saul having discovered that his successor was already appointed, persecuted David, whose adventures constitute a narrative of romantic interest in the book of Samuel. Saul fell in battle against the Philistines, and David succeeded him about 1056 B. C.

The reign of David, which lasted forty years, forms a splendid epoch in Jewish history. He was victorious over all his neighbors. He reduced not only the whole of Canaan, but took possession of the country of Edom as far as the Red sea, of Moab, of part of Syria, and formed alliances with the kings of Hamath and of Tyre. His power stretched from the borders of Damascus to the Elanitic or eastern branch of the Red sea, and from the coast of the Philistines to near the Euphrates.

David took Jerusalem, which was a town and fort of the Jebusites, a Canaanitish tribe till then unconquered, and made it the capital of the kingdom. He died at an old age, leaving to his son and successor, Solomon, a flourishing and secure kingdom, a full treasury, and a well disciplined militia. The reign of Solomon was long and peaceful. He raised the famous temple on Mount Moriah, on the east side of Jerusalem, and employed Tyrian and other foreign artificers for the purpose.

Solomon was a very wealthy prince. He encouraged commerce, and had ships on the Red sea, manned by Tyrians, which traded with Ophir. His close alliance with the Phoenicians was of great advantage to him. He supplied them with corn; and received timber from Lebanon, and other goods, in exchange. The Phœnician caravans to Arabia and Persia passed through his dominions. His own subjects carried on a trade with

Egypt, with which country Solomon was on friendly terms; and he married a daughter of one of the Pharaohs. He is said to have built Tadmor (or Palmyra) and Baalbek. But his great expenditure, and the taxes by which he supplied his wants, made the people dissatisfied; whilst his own example encouraged them in their licentiousness and effeminacy. He died after a forty years' reign; and his son, Rehoboam, was only able to retain possession of the southern part of the country, comprising the territory of Judah and Benjamin, which then assumed the name of the kingdom of Judah; while the other Ten Tribes elected Jeroboam as their king, and retained the name of the kingdom of Israel, which had, first, Sichem, and afterward Samaria, for its capital. This division took place about 975 B. C.

The kingdom of Israel lasted two hundred and fifty years, through a succession of stormy and blood-stained reigns; and was in the end overthrown by the Assyrians, who carried the inhabitants into captivity, from which they never returned—nor has the existence of their progeny ever been ascertained.

The kingdom of Judah lasted above a century and a half longer, under the dynasty of the house of David, until Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after repeated invasions, destroyed Jerusalem, 588 B. C., and carried its inhabitants into captivity. Thus the Jewish monarchy terminated after a period of about five centuries from its first institution, the stirring events of which period are related in the books of Kings and Chronicles. During this time flourished the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah,

and Habakkuk. Daniel and Ezekiel belong to the period of the captivity.

The captivity of Judah lasted seventy years; after which, Cyrus, having conquered Babylon, allowed the Jews to return to their own country. They assembled for that purpose to the number of forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, under Zerubbabel, a descendant of their kings; and on arriving in Judea were joined by those of the common people, and cultivators of the soil, who had remained in their native country. They began rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple; and their neighbors, the Samaritans, who inhabited part of the territory of the former kingdom of Israel, offered to join them in the furtherance of the great national work—an offer, however, which was rejected by the Jews, who looked upon the Samaritans as alien colonists, although the Samaritans themselves asserted their descent from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

When the Assyrians led the Ten Tribes into captivity, they probably took away only the higher classes of people, as the Babylonians did with those of Judea, and did not depopulate the whole country. Besides which, during the course of more than two centuries, and particularly after the subversion of the Assyrian empire, many exiles, or descendants of exiles, may have found their way back to their native land. The fact that the Samaritans have preserved the "Pentateuch" in the original characters, while the Jews, on their return from Babylon, adopted the Chaldean form of letters, is strongly in favor of their Israelitish descent, though they may have been mixed by alliance with Assyrian and other colonists. The later Jews, how-

ever, showed a deadly animosity against the Samaritans, whom they insisted on considering as aliens and idolaters, although they in reality acknowledged the laws of Moses.

The character of the Jews themselves had undergone a considerable change during their Babylonish captivity. They had become more exclusively attached to their country and their laws, and we hear no more of their proneness to idolatry after that epoch, as in former times. They strictly avoided intermarriage with foreigners, and assumed in every respect that unsocial spirit toward all except their own community for which they have been so often reproached. Adversity had soured their minds, while the expectations of a Messiah, who was announced by their prophets, roused the national pride. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which, though always implied, is not explicitly mentioned in the Mosaic law, was also tenaciously held, especially among the great sect of the Chasadim, or Pharisees.

Under the mild rule of the Persian kings, the Jews enjoyed many of the advantages of independence united with security. They were allowed the management of their internal affairs, and the high-priest was the chief magistrate. In this manner they lived quietly and unnoticed, but yet thriving, for about two centuries, till the year 333 B. C., when Alexander the Great, after gaining the battle of Issus, appeared in Syria. Jerusalem made its submission, and was spared by the conqueror.

After Alexander's death, Judea fell under the dominion of the Ptolemies, who showed favor to the Jews, and planted colonies of them in their capital Alexan-

dria, and at Cyrene. The high-priests continued to have the direction of the internal administration of the country. From the Ptolemies, Judea passed under the rule of the kings of Syria, under the reign of Antiochus the Great, 198 B. C. Antiochus visited Jerusalem, and confirmed the privileges which the Jews had enjoyed under the Ptolemies; but under the reign of his second son, Antiochus Epiphanes, owing to the intrigues of several aspirants to the high-priesthood, an insurrection broke out in Jerusalem, which was put down by Antiochus with great slaughter of the inhabitants.

Antiochus now attempted what no one had attempted before him—to force the Jews to renounce their God, and worship Jupiter of Olympus, whose statue was erected on the altar of the Temple. The Jews generally refused. Great cruelties were committed by the officers of Antiochus against the recusants in every part of Judea, until a spirited resistance, begun by Mattathias, and continued under his son Judas, styled Maccabee, had the effect of delivering the country from the hateful oppression of the Syrians.

The Maccabees were a family of heroes. After the death of Judas and two of his brothers, who fell in battle, Jonathan, another brother, continued the struggle, and having formed an alliance with Rome, was left at last in quiet possession of Judea. A revolution in the kingdom of Syria added to his strength and importance. Alexander Balas, who claimed the crown of Syria, offered Jonathan the high-priesthood and exemption from all tribute and taxes, besides other advantages if he would support him against his rival, Demetrius. Jonathan assented, and Balas, having seated himself on

the throne, 150 B. C., presented Jonathan with a purple robe, and appointed him Meridarch of Judea, a title which, under his successors, was changed to that of king. With Jonathan begins the dynasty of the Asmonæans, or "Illustrious," which ruled Judea for about a century, and under which the country resumed a degree of independence and splendor which it had not experienced since the reigns of David and Solomon.

The last of the Asmonæan dynasty were put to death by Herod, son of Antipater, the Idumean, who, with the support of the Romans, became king of Judea, 38 B. C. He died in the same year that Christ was born. With Herod, the independence of Judea may be said to have expired. His son, Archelaus, was appointed Ethnarch of Judea Proper, Idumea, and Samaria; his brother, Herod Antipas, had Galilee and Perea; to Herod Philip were given the provinces of Trachonitis, Batanea, and Gaulonitis, east of the Jordan; and another Philip had Iturea.

Thus the dominions of Herod were dismembered between four of his sons, who are accordingly called Tetrarchs in the New Testament. Archelaus was summoned to Rome, after a reign of nine years, to answer certain charges brought against him by his subjects, and was banished by Augustus to Vienne, in Gaul. Judea thus became a Roman province, or rather a district dependent on the great province or prefecture of Syria, though administered by a special governor, a man usually of the Equestrian order. This is the state to which Judea was reduced in the time of our Saviour. The Jews, however, continued to enjoy the exercise of their religious and municipal liberties.

Under the reign of Claudius, Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, who had been already appointed by Caligula ethnarch of Galilee, was appointed king of Judea and all the former dominions of his grandfather, but he died three years after, at Cæsarea, in Palestine, A. D. 44. This is the Herod mentioned in chapter xii. of the Acts. His son, called likewise Herod Agrippa, was then a minor, and Judea relapsed into a Roman province. In A. D. 53, Claudius gave to Herod Agrippa the provinces east of the Jordan, which had belonged to Philip the Tetrarch, and Nero added to them part of Galilee. But Judea and Samaria continued to be administered by Roman procurators.

Agrippa, however, was entrusted by the emperor with the superintendence of the Temple, and the right of appointing and deposing the high-priest at Jerusalem; and he occasionally resided in that city, while the Roman governor generally resided at Cæsarea. This second Herod Agrippa is the one mentioned in Acts xxv., xxvi., there styled King Agrippa, whom St. Paul addressed in so impressive a manner in his defence. Agrippa was present at the final catastrophe at Jerusalem.

A succession of more than usually rapacious Roman governors, Felix, Albinus, and Florus, had driven the Jews to the verge of despair. A tumult, which broke out at Cæsarea, between the Greeks and the Jews, followed by fresh exactions and cruelties of Florus, who seemed to wish to drive the people into insurrection, led the way to an open revolt against the Romans. Agrippa, who, with his sister Berenice, happened to be at Jerusalem, remonstrated with the people on the rash-

ness of the attempt, but in vain, and he withdrew to his own dominions. A party called the Zealots, or fanatics, now obtained the ascendancy over the minds of the people, and the feeble Roman garrison was overpowered and massacred. At the same time the Greeks of Cæsarea massacred all the Jews in that city, and the Roman governor, Florus, took no notice of the transaction.

Other cities of Palestine and Syria followed the example of Cæsarea by a wholesale butchery of the Jews. The Jews retaliated in those towns of Palestine where they were the majority, by murdering the Syrians and Greeks. Cestius Gallus, the Prefect of Syria, who had winked at the exactions of Florus, now advanced against Jerusalem with one legion and many auxiliaries, but he was obliged to retire, and was completely defeated by the insurgents in his retreat, with the loss of nearly six thousand men. The revolt now became general throughout Judea and Galilee.

Nero, who received the news in Achaia, sent for Vespasian, an officer of tried abilities, and gave him the command of Syria, A. D. 66–7. Vespasian assembled his forces at Ptolemais, where he was joined by Agrippa, and by his own son Titus. His army, including auxiliaries, amounted to sixty thousand men. For one year he employed himself in scouring the country, and reducing the strongholds of the Jews. In the following year, A. D. 68, he was advancing to form the siege of Jerusalem, when he received the news of Nero's death, followed by the rapid succession of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Vespasian kept his troops ready for a more important enterprise than the taking of Jerusalem.

That city had, in consequence, a respite of nearly two years, during which, however, the inhabitants destroyed each other through intestine factions. At last Vespasian was proclaimed emperor, and having defeated Vitellius and entered Rome, he sent his son Titus to complete the subjugation of Palestine.

The regular siege began in the spring of A. D. 70, and it lasted till the following September, when Jerusalem was finally taken and totally destroyed, with its Temple: the inhabitants were killed or sold as slaves. The fearful events of that siege are narrated by Josephus. The Arch of Titus at Rome is a standing record of that conquest. The landed property of the country was put up to sale. Still the Jewish population was by no means extirpated from the country, and we find them rising in vast numbers in the reign of Hadrian, and again engaging the Roman legions, commanded by Severus. They were, however, overpowered with immense slaughter, and the second desolation of Judea took place.

Hadrian issued an edict forbidding circumcision, the reading of the Mosaic law, and the observance of the Sabbath.

The dispersion of the Jews over the world, which is commonly dated from the destruction of Jerusalem, had in reality begun long before. The Ptolemies had transplanted large colonies of them into Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus; and Antiochus the Great settled great numbers in the towns of Asia. In the time of Cicero there was a wealthy Jewish community in Italy. A passage of Philo, in his letter to Agrippa, enumerates the countries in which the Jews were settled in the time of Caligula: Egypt, Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, the great-

est part of Asia Minor as far as Bithynia, the shores of the Euxine, Macedonia, Thessaly, Ætolia, Attica, the Peloponnesus, Cyprus, and Crete, besides the countries beyond the Euphrates; for at the end of the Babylonish captivity, many Jews voluntarily remained in Mesopotamia, where they continued to form for several years a considerable community alternately under the Parthian and Roman dominion. After the final destruction of Jerusalem, the Mesopotamian Jews acknowledged an hereditary chief, who was called "The Prince of the Captivity;" while the western Jews, who were scattered all over the Roman empire, had their spiritual head in the Patriarch of Tiberias. The civil condition of the Jews throughout the Roman empire, has been not unaptly compared with that of the Greeks under the Turks.

Under the Antonines and the succeeding emperors, the harsh provisions of the edict of Hadrian were either revoked or allowed to lie dormant, and the Jews were left to follow their old usages and rites, being only prohibited from making proselytes. New synagogues were erected by them, and schools opened in the principal cities of the empire. The Jews, by means of their commercial industry, acquired considerable wealth; many of them obtained the rank of Roman citizens, and at the same time exemption from military service. During this period of peace, Rabbi Jehuda, one of the Patriarchs of Tiberias, composed the Mischna, or code of traditional law, in which he embodied all the authorized interpretations of the Mosaic law, the decisions of the learned, and the precedents of the courts or schools. At a later period, Rabbi Ascha, a learned Mesopotamian Jew, with the assistance of his disciples, compiled the

“Gemara,” which, with the “Mischna,” forms the “Babylonian Talmud,” a work in which the most absurd traditions are mixed up with wise precepts, profound allegories, and pleasing moral apologues.

Constantine made several laws concerning the Jews : one forbidding them to endanger the lives of Christian converts ; another prohibiting Christians from embracing Judaism ; and a third prohibiting Jews from possessing Christian slaves. Under his successor Constantius, an insurrection which broke out in Judea, and another tumult at Alexandria, in which the Jews were deeply implicated, gave occasion to fresh enactments against them. They were heavily taxed, were forbidden to marry Christian women, and the edict of Hadrian, which prohibited their approaching near Jerusalem, was formally renewed.

Julian favored the Jews, and proposed to restore their Temple. Some extraordinary appearances, which are related by Ammianus Marcellinus, frightened the workmen who were employed in the restoration, and the death of Julian put an end to the design. Under the following emperors the Jews were protected by the state, though often annoyed by the intemperate zeal of the more violent Christian churchmen.

Laws were passed by Theodosius and confirmed by Arcadius and Honorius, recognizing the power of the Jewish patriarch to punish the refractory members of their own community, and the prefects were forbidden from interfering with his judicial authority. In disputes with the Christians, both parties appeared before the ordinary tribunals. Under Theodosius II., the Jews were forbidden from publicly celebrating certain festivals

which occasioned collisions between them and the Christians.

Theodoric and the other Gothic kings of Italy, protected the Jews. During the frequent wars and invasions of that period, the Jews had the slave-trade of Europe in great measure in their hands; and several councils, and Pope Gregory I., interfered to prevent their abusing the power which they had thus acquired over the persons of Christians. That wise and humane pope, in his pastoral letters, bewails and denounces this traffic, which was carried on in Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and France; he directs the bishops to interfere so as to prevent Jews from retaining Christians; slaves, who had been long in possession of Jewish landed proprietors, should be considered as "villains" attached to the soil, and should not be transplanted or sold away. He also entreated the Frankish kings to banish the traffic in slaves from their dominions.

Justinian was one of the first who enacted really oppressive and intolerant laws against the Jews. In litigations between Christians and Jews, or between Christians only, their testimony was admitted; but that of a Samaritan or a Manichæan, was of no value. By another law, all unbelievers, heathens, Jews, and Samaritans, could neither be judges nor prefects, nor fill any other dignity in the State. Justinian also enacted, that in mixed marriages between Jews and Christians, the chief authority over the children should rest with the Christian parent. A Jew parent could not disinherit his Christian child. But the Samaritans were treated more harshly; they were entirely deprived of the right of bequeathing or conveying their property to

unbelievers. Those of their children who embraced Christianity inherited to the exclusion of the rest. Samaritans could not sue in courts of law. Their synagogues were ordered to be destroyed.

By a subsequent edict, and on the humane interposition of Sergius, Bishop of Cæsarea, Justinian somewhat mitigated the rigor of these enactments against the Samaritans; but his son, Justin, again enforced the original statutes against them. The effect of this persecution seems to have been to extinguish gradually that once flourishing community, the members of which probably embraced Christianity for the preservation of their property. In subsequent history, the Samaritans no longer appear as a separate people. In the 17th century, however, a small community of them was discovered in the neighborhood of their holy Mount Gerizim, who still possessed the law in the old Samaritan character, and their descendants still exist to this day.

The Jews, however, were too strong to be annihilated, like the Samaritans, by imperial edicts: they had even the power of revenge. When Chosroes II. invaded Syria, the Jews of Palestine rose to join the Persians, with whom they entered Jerusalem, then a Christian city, and perpetrated a dreadful slaughter of the Christian inhabitants. They are said to have purchased at a cheap price the captives of their allies, the Persians, for the sake of murdering them. The victories of Heraclius, however, soon put an end to their momentary triumph.

The rise of Mohammedanism brought an unfavorable change to the eastern Jews. Mohammed endeavored at first to win them over, but the Jews would not

acknowledge a descendant of Hagar, the bondwoman, as the greatest of prophets; and Mohammed treated them without mercy in Arabia, where they were at that time numerous. But under the Caliphs, his successors, they were protected on the easy terms of paying tribute; and as they made no resistance, they experienced not only protection but even encouragement from their new masters, whom they followed through their tide of conquest along the coast of Northern Africa. They also contributed materially to the triumph of the Crescent in the Spanish peninsula.

In Spain, under the Gothic kings, the Jews experienced the first of those sweeping proscriptions which they were doomed to suffer in every country in Christian Europe. A series of oppressive laws were passed against them under the significant title of "Statutes against Jewish wickedness, and for the general extirpation of Jewish errors." At last, king Sisebut (Sigebert) commanded them either to forsake their religion, or to leave the country. Many fled, others were thrown into prison, and ninety thousand are said to have received baptism.

The Fourth Council of Toledo mitigated the rigor of the laws against the Jews by declaring, "that men ought not to be compelled to believe by force, although all who had once embraced the faith must be constrained to adhere to it." But the Eighth Council of Toledo, A. D. 653, re-enforced the former statutes against the Jews; and following councils enacted more rigorous laws. One hundred lashes on the naked body, chains, mutilation, banishment, and confiscation, were the punishment of those who observed Jewish practices and rites. All converted Jews were put under the strictest surveillance

The acts of the Twelfth Council of Toledo concerning the Jews, are a complete model of ecclesiastical intolerance and refinement in persecution. Under king Egica, while the Saracens were spreading along the shore of Africa, opposite to Spain, a general conspiracy of the Jews was reported; and another council passed a decree to disperse the whole race as slaves, confiscate their property, and seize all their children, under seventeen years of age, to be brought up as Christians. Many escaped to return with the Saracen invaders; and the munificence of the Mohammedan princes toward them indicates that by their knowledge of the country the Jews had been highly instrumental in advancing the conquest.

In Moorish Spain, the Jews had really a golden age, which lasted for centuries. There they cultivated science and learning: and the names of Benjamin of Tudela, Isaac of Cordova, Hasdar, the confidant of Abdarrahan, and a host of others, attest their proficiency. Rodriguez de Castro and Vicente Ximino, give notices of the writings of the Spanish Jews. At the same time they were thriving in the East under the Caliphs of Bagdad, whose favor they enjoyed, at least until the end of the 10th century.

Charlemagne protected the Jews like his other subjects; they filled municipal offices; they were physicians and bankers; and Isaac, a Jew, was chosen by that emperor as his ambassador to Haroun-al-Raschid, Caliph of Bagdad, a mission which was considered of the greatest importance at the time. The Jews enjoyed the same or even greater influence under Louis le Debonnaire

and Charles the Bold ; but toward the end of the latter reign, the clergy began afresh to show their hostility.

The Council of Meaux re-enacted the exclusion of Jews from all civil offices ; but it was under the third or Capet dynasty that the Jews suffered real persecution in France. Philippe Auguste, pressed by the wants of an empty exchequer, and perhaps also by the reports of fanatics, who charged the Jews with all sorts of crimes, banished, A. D. 1180, all the Jews from his dominions, confiscated their property, and declared all debts due to them to be annulled. About twenty years afterward, the Jews were allowed to re-enter France, which they did in great numbers. This was the beginning of a series of alternate proscriptions and relaxations, continued under the following reigns for about two centuries, until they were finally expelled under Charles VI.

In Germany, about the same age, they suffered under sudden bursts of popular fanaticism. They were massacred at the cry of "Hep ! Hep !" the initials of the words, "*Hierosolyma est perdita.*" St. Bernard and Pope Eugenius III. loudly reprobated these atrocities. In Italy, the Jews seemed to have enjoyed greater, though not always uninterrupted security ; but their safest asylum was Poland, where Casimir the Great allowed them considerable privileges, and where they formed the only middle order between the nobles and the serfs. It was in Spain and Portugal, after the expulsion of the Moors, that the proscription of the Jews was most sweeping and effectual. The regular Inquisition, established under Ferdinand and Isabella, undertook the task of punishing all relapsed converts. As for the unconverted Jews, the edict of 1492, made

at the instigation of the inquisitor Torquemada, banished them all from the kingdom. The number of Jews thus expelled from Spain has been vaguely estimated at half a million, and even eight hundred thousand. They were allowed to carry away or sell only their movables. Few of them consented to embrace Christianity in order to remain. Soon afterward they were driven away from Portugal also, with circumstances of still greater barbarity. Many perished, and others took refuge on the African coast. The expulsion of the Jews, and that of the Moors, or Moriscoes, drained Spain of its most useful subjects.

Throughout the dominions of the Sultan the Jews were allowed to settle and follow their trades, though looked upon with scorn by the Osmanlees. In the regencies of Barbary they settled likewise in great numbers.

During the eighteenth century a milder spirit of toleration manifested itself toward the Jews in several countries of Europe. Maria Theresa and Joseph I. gave them equal rights, and subjected them to the same laws as the Christians. Frederick, called the Great, was not so liberal toward them, for he laid them under peculiar restrictions and disqualifications. In Holland they have long formed a highly flourishing, honorable, and intelligent community.

Napoleon, in 1806, assembled a Sanhedrin. at Paris, and submitted to them twelve questions concerning the moral and social doctrines and discipline of the Jews. Their answers being found satisfactory, an ordinance was issued giving the Jews a regular organization throughout France, and placing them on the same foot-

ing as other Frenchmen. This system has remained unaltered. The King of Prussia, and other German powers, have followed the example. In Russia the Jews are subject to many restrictions, especially the Rabbis.

The Jews in France are reckoned at fifty thousand; in Italy, thirty-six thousand; in the Austrian empire, five hundred and twenty thousand; in Prussia, one hundred and thirty-five thousand; in the rest of Germany, one hundred and thirty-eight thousand; in Holland and Belgium, eighty thousand; in Great Britain, thirty thousand; in Russia and Poland, six hundred and fifty-eight thousand; in the Turkish dominions they have been vaguely estimated at eight hundred thousand; in Persia they are few and oppressed; there are communities of them at Bokhara and other parts of Tartary, in India, and even in China. In the United States they are reckoned at about fifty thousand.

It does not appear at what time the Jews found their way to England, but they were settled there in the Saxon period, and even as early as A. D. 650. From the time of the Conquest, the Jews in England rapidly increased in numbers. Under the three first Norman kings they lived undisturbed, as we are informed, and apparently acquired great wealth. But under Stephen and his successors they suffered grievously from the rapacity of the kings, and the bigoted intolerance of the people. The cruel persecutions they experienced from all persons, both lay and ecclesiastical, poor and rich, are fully attested, not only by their own writers, but by the evidence of their enemies.

Finally, in the reign of Edward I., about A. D. 1290,

all the Jews were banished from the kingdom. Their numbers at that time are conjectured (but on what grounds we are not aware) to have been between fifteen and sixteen thousand. It was not till after the Restoration, A. D. 1660, that the Jews again settled in England; and though, under the Protectorate, they had entered into negotiations with Cromwell to obtain permission to enter the island, nothing seems to have been done in the matter; and those who have investigated the subject, bring forward no proof of leave being formally granted them to return. After the Restoration, it seems probable that they came in gradually, without either permission or opposition; and since that time foreign Jews have been on the same footing as other aliens with respect to entering that country. In the year 1753, an act was passed to enable foreign Jews to be naturalized without taking the sacrament; but the act was repealed in the following session, under the influence of popular feeling, which was most strongly opposed to the measure of 1753. Since then they have been unmolested; and very recently laws have been passed granting them civil rights, and enabling them even to take seats in Parliament without the necessity of taking an oath forbidden by their law.

In the United States, the Jews enjoy the same rights as other citizens, and their number is rapidly increasing.

“There is,” says James Douglas, Esq., “one good omen for the future success of Christianity, and its universal diffusion, in the present existence of the Jews throughout every climate under heaven. When the whole

world, with the exception of Judea, had lost the worship of the one only God, there seemed little prospect, in human probability, of that pure worship being restored in all the countries of the earth, and less, that it would be restored by Jews, whose very dispensation was confined to the land of Judea; but so it is, the unity of the Deity has become, in one sense, universally recognized, by the Jews being universally dispersed; and in countries in which Christianity has failed to establish itself, the Jews remain perpetual witnesses of the unity of the Godhead. That the knowledge of the true God should, in this way, be scattered and sown over the whole earth, like seed scattered by the winds, gives hope that, in after ages, there will be a better seed time, and a more abundant harvest; since Christianity, by the natural order of events, and its superiority of advanced civilization, will naturally spread over the world. Its supremacy in knowledge, its improvements in life, and its opinions in religion, are alike adapted to a higher state of civilization.

“It is impossible that this pre-eminence which Europe has attained, can for ever remain pent up by those mutual jealousies which have retarded the development of the forces of its States; and the time must come when the torrent which has been so long resisted will burst with accumulated strength, and precipitate itself over all the adjoining countries. Europe, even in those States where the government is worse, and information at the lowest ebb, is wonderfully increasing in population, and in knowledge, in the arts of war and of peace, in agriculture and in commerce; and the new States of America are entering upon a fresh career of advancement, and,

while they are doubling their own resources in the rapidity of their progress, they are about to communicate a new impulse to European enterprise.

“The reverse is the prospect of the countries that are not Christian ; instead of hope and enterprise, there are apathy and inertness, and instead of growth, there is a slow but certain decay. In the Mahometan States, society is turned backward, and retracing its steps ; villages are brought under the plough, and the field that was once cultivated is abandoned to the wandering herdsmen, and the tent is pitched beside the broken pillars of the palace. Of philosophers there are only to be found the tombs, and whatever learning the Moslems had, is retained, not in schools, but in libraries. It is Christian States alone that suspend the fate of the Mahometan kingdoms, and the Turks subsist but at the mercy of those whom they have so often conquered. But no obstacle can long resist which is ever worn away by the current, and brief must the duration of those powers be, which oppose themselves to the stream of events, and rest only on foundations which are fast mouldering into dust. Weak are the allies of that government which places its reliance in ignorance and inactivity, to oppose the changes of opinion and desire of improvement in men’s minds already half emancipated, and who feel their fetters worn off and falling away.

“It would also be extremely desirable that some learned men should devote their attention to exhibit to the Jews, under every shape, the futility of their rabbinical traditions and writings, and the insuperable difficulties under which the Mosaic dispensation labors, unless it

be acknowledged that it is fulfilled and terminated in Christianity. If the Jews can once be brought to reflect, it is impossible but they must feel how untenable is their adherence to the law of Moses—a dispensation which was strictly local, and which their dispersion among the Gentiles has itself abrogated and rendered of none effect.”

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